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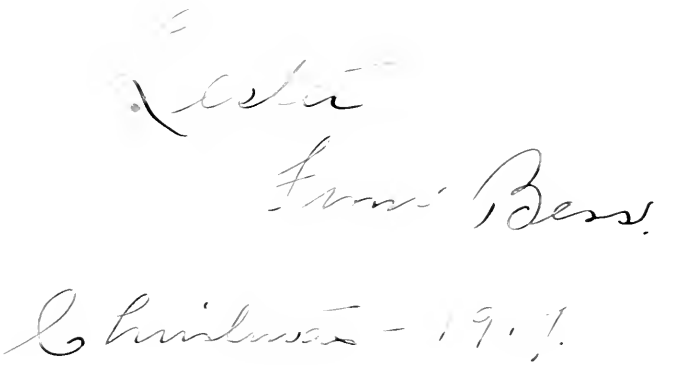

THE POLICE FOLLOW RIDDLE'S CUE

THE NEW NORTHLAND

BY

L. P. GRATACAP

WITH 16 DESIGNS
BY
ALBERT OPERTI

NEW YORK
THOMAS BENTON
1915

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KROCKER LAND

A ROMANCE OF DISCOVERY

BY
ALFRED ERICKSON
PROF. HLMATH BJORNSEN
ANTOINE GORITZ
SPRUCE HOPKINS

THE NARRATIVE BY
ALFRED ERICKSON

EDITED BY
AZAZIEL LINK

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EDITORIAL NOTE

This remarkable narrative of Arctic exploration is itself a remarkable confirmation of the wisdom of that tireless hunt for NEWS which has become second nature to the newspaper man, and while distinctively a mark of his calling, has attached to his profession the opprobrium of "yellowness." The appropriation of this color—so intimately associated in nature with the golden illumination of the noon, the royal charm of lilies, and the enduring lure of gold—to designate an irresponsible and shameless sensationalism has never been adequately explained. The "yellowness" of the live journalist, turning with an instinctive scent to follow to its end every new trail of incident, sniffing in each passing rumor the presence of hidden and serviceable scandal, and ruthlessly breaking through the sham obstruction of modesty to snatch the culprit or to free the victim, cannot certainly be referred to the torpor marked by the *jaundice* of the invalid, nor to the weakness of the last stages of an emaciating fever. Perhaps if the reproach is to be made, or can be made, intelligible, the yellow color finds its subtle analogue in a mustard plaster.

That popular cataplasm has a dignified and ancient history, and is gratefully recorded in literature for nearly two thousand years as a *contrarient* of value, allaying hidden aches through the excoriation of the uninjured and painless surfaces. The

process seems to involve an injustice in principle, but it is, in spite of abstractions, a beneficent practice. The "yellowness" of newspapers may amaze modesty, startle discretion, and afflict innocence, but it cures interior disorders, and the unpleasantness of an ulcerated or inflamed skin should be condoned or forgotten for the benefit of a regulated stomach or a renovated joint.

However, this all *en passant*, as only remotely, and yet diffidently, related to the manner of my obtaining the circumstances and facts of the following adventure. I have attributed my success to the pertinacity of instinct and the olfactory sense of mischief. It is true. Without one or the other—though the combination of both rendered failure impossible—I might not now be in the enviable position of proclaiming a "beat" on my professional rivals which no amount of editorial venom, aspersion, contempt and innuendo will ever obliterate from the annals of journalism, as unprecedented.

I am indeed afflicted at moments with a sort of discomfiture over my own modesty in not having ransacked to better advantage the commercial possibilities of my tenacity and acumen. Incredible and hypnotizing as is this story of Mr. Alfred Erickson, as a foil to its romantic daring and its transcendent interest, the brief relation of the episode—and its development—that led to its publication, has a delightful thrill of excitement, and an up-to-date volubility, so to speak, of incident, that frames the story in the most exhilarating contrasts.

An office boy, a temporary expedient for a messenger and page, Jack Riddles, mercurial, vagarious, and quick-witted, a sandy haired, long-limbed, peaked-nosed and weazel-eyed creation, with flattened cheeks, whose jackets were always

short, and whose trousers despised any intimacy with the tops of his shoes, got me the story.

Jack is destined for great things in our metropolitan annals. In the mission of the Progressive party, with its millenial attachments, Jack and his sort would be progressively eliminated. Crime exists for detection, and detection is Life at its *n*th power for such as he. Jack is endowed with a rare intuition of ways and means when the center of a reportorial mystery is to be perforated, and the process of "getting there" to *him* is as inevitable as the first half of the alphabet. Riddle's only counterpart was Octavius Guy, alias Gooseberry, Lawyer Bruff's boy in Wilkie Collin's story of the Moonstone.

He began his exploit on the top of a Fifth Avenue 'bus, and it was about the middle of September, 1912. Jack has a Hogarthian sense for the multitudinous, the psychological, the junction of circumstance and expression in revealing a plot or betraying a criminal. To hang over the railing of a Fifth Avenue 'bus and watch the crowds, the motor cars, each vibratory shock, as the behemoth shivers and plunges, bringing your interpretative eye unexpectedly into a new relation with the faces of that ceremonious throng, was intoxication for Jack. It evoked exuberantly the passion of espionage. There was indeed concealment here, in the packed and methodical progression of people and people, and yet more people. Yet with an average dumbness or dullness, or just the homogeneous stare of business, or the vapid contentment of contiguity to riches and fashion, Jack caught glimpses, direct, profound, of dismay or discontent; of the pallid, revolting grimace of suffering, the snarl of envy, or the deeper placidity of crime.

They were rare, but Jack watched for them; his precocity ran that way and he was rewarded. It

used up his dimes, it widened the solutions of continuity in his nether garments and brought his feet more familiarly in contact with the hard flagging. Some supersensual instinct urged him. The succeeding story attests the splendor of the revelation he uncovered. Jack may have been about eighteen years of age.

It was opposite the Public Library, just below Forty-second Street on Fifth Avenue and on the west side of that thoroughfare that Jack's eyes, after a long stop which held up an endless phalanx of automobiles, fell upon a man and woman who conveyed to his thought a hint of crime. The woman was beautiful too, a Spanish siren, full in form, with developed curves that yielded so slightly to the sway of her tight fitting mauve dress as to start the conjecture that she did not belong to the more rarified types of Venuses. A light feather boa, deliciously pearly gray in tone, heightened the carnation of her cheeks. These in turn yielded to the orbed splendor of her eyes, and that to the wealth of black hair darkly globed underneath a maroon velvet turban-like cap, in whose folds twinkled a firmament of greenish stars. Jack literally devoured her radiance, so near was he to her as she descended with her companion the last terrace to the sidewalk between the amorphous lions of the Public Library.

The man with her was inordinately, insolently handsome, dark and tall, dressed a little beyond the form of reticence, as was the woman. Herein perhaps lurked the confession of their mutual depravity to Jack, an untutored psychologist; to all besides it appealed as a momentary sensation, to some as barely an infringement of good taste.

The man wore a light fedora hat that suited the bravado of his curled and graceful moustache, the ovate outlines of his face, his liquid, voluptuous

eyes, the sensuous thickness of his lips. Observation stopped short at his face where he intended it should. Its arrest was made imperative by a blue and ormolu tie, relieved against a softly-tinted yellow shirt, carrying a horseshoe of demantoid garnets in a wreath of little diamonds. His feet were incased in tan gaiters, a permissible distraction. For an instant only the spectator was rewarded with an appreciation of their admirable *tournure*. Otherwise he was in black, relieved by the white lining at the lapels of his coat, and he carried a cane in his gloved hand.

It was a few instants after Jack's ravished eyes had fastened on this entrancing couple, that the cane was raised sharply in the air to descend abruptly on the woman's head. The attack involved the man's slight retreat—a backward gesture—and his turning aside, whereby his profile cut keenly across the sunlit stone behind him, and Jack was shocked into a delighted recognition of the same profile in a print in the show window of Krauschaar's gallery. He remembered the title; it was "Mephistopheles, A Modern Guise of an Old Offender"; a smiling, swarthy beau at the feet of a remonstrating and beautiful *ingenue*.

The explosion was evidently the climax of an altercation. Jack recalled the previous animated demeanor of the couple. Explanatory reflections were cut short by the velocity of the woman's defense. She flung herself on the man, caught his arms with her outstretched hands, and kicked him viciously. Infuriated, he tore himself away, raised the cane and the next moment would have inflicted a harsher insult on the defiant Amazon, into whose face, so Jack thought, had sprung a tigerish fury, when, from the stupified and expectant crowd before them, half shrinking and half jubilant, shot a tall figure, whose interposition transfixed both contestants.

This meteoric stranger was remarkable for his broad shoulders, and a peculiar taper in his frame downward to his feet, that made him figuratively a human top, the impression of any actual deformity arising from his immense chest, on which, by a connection scarcely deserving consideration as a neck, sat his squat, contracted head. Prodigious whiskers covered his face, invading his high cheeks almost to the outer limits of his sunken eyes.

This hirsute prodigality contrasted with his cropped cranium and his closely shaven lips. The latter were long and thin-compressed, they seemed to separate his chin from the rest of his face by a red seam. His forehead was low and his head was covered with a steamer-tourist's cap. His clothes were of plaid.

As he rushed between the wranglers he caught each by the shoulder, and he pushed them apart. He had turned toward the avenue, facing the wondering throng, and Jack heard him speak quickly and sharply, but in a guttural, obscured way that suggested something that was not English or, if it was, it was hopelessly incoherent to Jack's ears from its imperfect articulation.

The man and woman seemed stunned into immobility, and then obeying his gesture, followed him on the sidewalk, jostled and pressed by the crowd which at first, inquisitive but timorous, had recoiled a little from the enigmatical encounter and then, almost obstreperous and decidedly interested engulfed the trio, who however pushed their way through, energetically piloted by the stranger. How quickly a drama evolves!

All three had almost simultaneously stepped into the little *scenario*, and yet by the illusion of an assumed sequence the last actor seemed a novelty, related as unexpected, to the other two, as more familiar and apparent. None of the three spoke,

nor did they heed the interruption of the spectators who tardily parted to let them pass. The moment Forty-second Street was reached the leader turned toward Sixth Avenue. Jack standing on the roof of the 'bus, which slowly swung off into the restored movement northward as the obstruction somewhere ahead disappeared, saw them enter an automobile opposite the northern entrance to the library and dash westward.

Jack did not argue the matter with himself. He had no compunctions. He jumped straight for the to him (as perhaps to anyone) tangible certainty that he had struck a trail of iniquity. But how to follow it? His ruminations were cut short by the loud honk of an automobile and there, returning to Fifth Avenue at Fiftieth Street, he saw the yellow limousine which contained the suspects wheeling into the procession and, forced by the unrelieved pressure to relax its impatience, moving with the limping concourse at the same pace.

Jack watched it eagerly. His eyes never left it. It swayed a little to the right and to the left as the driver, probably under threats or persuasion, endeavored to insert his vehicle into the chance spaces that opened before him. This irregular and tentative progress brought the automobile at length directly alongside of the 'bus which had on it the Nemesis of its (the automobile's) occupants. It was underneath Jack's very eyes; he could have dropped on its roof almost unnoticed. Jack's heart beat with trip-hammer throbs, and his mind rehearsed the possibilities of murder, arson, burglary, brigandage, kidnapping, etc., gathering headway in that uncanny conference going on there below under that burnished but impenetrable roof. But he was exulting too with the steel-clad certainty of having a "case," and that a little intensive use of his wits would promote him from the

office floor to a reserved seat in the Reporters' Sanctum.

A jolt, a lurching swing, the vituperative shriek of an ungreased axle, and the 'bus followed a meandering lane that brought it into an unimpeded headway. Jack sprang to his feet and watched behind him the still imprisoned limousine—it too shot ahead; noiselessly as a speeding bird it overtook the 'bus and then with a graceful curve, almost as if in mockery of his impotence, it vanished into east Fifty-eighth Street.

Jack had a message for the Director of the Metropolitan Art Museum. It was from myself in response to an inquiry as to what space we could afford for a description of a new Morgan exhibit. Jack was a safe messenger, unmistakably accurate, but we always discounted his celerity, because of his preferences for a ride on a Fifth avenue 'bus and the little delinquencies of delay his observational powers tempted him to perpetrate. He was an hour later than the most generous allowance of time would justify. Jack was to bring back "copy" for the next day's issue. I lectured him. He was sullenly respectful, indifferently contrite, and showed a taciturn preoccupation that impressed my reportorial instinct as significant.

As a matter of fact the missing hour was used in traversing Fifty-eighth Street. The fruit of Jack's search was diminutive but it was conclusive. On the pavement in front of No. — east Fifty-eighth Street, Jack picked up a microscopic green glass star. He knew where it belonged—the spangled turban on top of the massed hair of that afternoon's *debutante; debutante* to Jack's official criticism.

This minute betrayal had dropped from her hat, from nowhere else, and the belligerent cane of her escort had dislodged it. It had lain somewhere in the folds and creases of the soft velvet, to fall just

there, unsuspectedly at the entrance of her retreat —a frail enamel bead releasing to the world a marvelous secret. For Jack Riddles intended to watch that house; he would enter it; if it concealed some half consummated plot of SIN, if indeed the plot was over, its victims disposed of, and the conspirators were there enjoying the harvest of their guilt, he would know it, and—the eventuality of failure never entered his head. He felt, in every fibre, a certainty of wrong-doing, something shadowy, perhaps darkly cruel in these people. His prescience was involuntary; he never explained it, he never himself understood it.

Jack lived in Brooklyn, with his wifeless father. That night as he left the office he dropped a postal at a lamp post and took a car north. He was following the trail. A little transposed I submit Jack's story as he gave it to me the next morning.

He came to the office a little late, and knocked at my door. On entering I saw instantly that he was in an advanced stage of nervous excitement. He was pale, and a fluttering involuntary movement of his hands, one over the other, as he stood before me, with a glitter in his peculiarly shaped and small eyes betrayed his mental agitation. He was quite wet, had probably been drenched, and the first symptoms of a chill showed that precautions were necessary to avert a possible collapse. I told him to sit down, opened a cellarette, which had its professional and commercial uses, and poured out a rather stiff jorum of the best whisky I owned.

As he swallowed in a gulping manner the proffered contents of the glass, he was rather a ludicrous and yet pitiful and heart-moving object. His disordered hair, shabby clothes and a certain forlorn wistfulness in his glance upward to me, combined with his lean and disjointed anatomy gave him an expression that was at once tender and

laughable. Only a Cruikshank could have done it justice. His spirits revived, animal heat reasserted itself, and back with it, as if it had stood somewhere aside until invited to return, came boastingly his invincible pugnacity and confidence.

"Mr. Link," his speech was customarily hesitating with a deprecatory manner as if forestalling interruption or correction, and impeded by a slight stutter, but now, in the tide and torrent of his thoughts, under the sway of the elation over his first bit of detective work, it was rapid but coherent, and oddly picturesque. "Mr. Link, I've nipped a pretty piece of mischief in the bud—seems so to me. Of course I'm just on the trail, and fetching up to the big game that I think is in sight, barring the trees—may take more work than I think. But the proposition is as clear as glass that there's a crooked game being pulled off at — east Fifty-eighth Street, and I'm convinced that 'the deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil,' as it goes in the prayer book, are behind it. Now here's the evidence—not much you may say, but I'll hang up my reputation on it—you know, Mr. Link, I have a little hereabouts at finding out things, and I'm just convinced *it*—won't drop.

"I was on the 'bus, stalled just below Forty-second Street, opposite the Library. I saw a couple of people, a man and a woman, coming down the steps to the street. The woman— Well, I couldn't begin to tell you how stunning she was. Beauty was just all over her, thick too, from her feet to her head. I remember now the thought struck me as I looked at her that she'd make a brass man turn round to see her when she'd passed. And the goods on her were as sweet and gay as herself—a picture, Mr. Link, a real picture, if ever a woman made one. The man was with her, good-looking and cruel; neat, too, and Hell painted on him so

plain it would make an angel throw a fit—if an angel could, supposin'.

"Now Mr. Link I hadn't looked that long," Jack snapped his fingers, "before I felt, sir, that they were *rotten*, not four flushers, but the *real bad*, like those the Sunday School man told us of, who 'build a town with blood, and establish a city by iniquity.'" The pause Jack interpolated here was as oracular as the quotation. I did him a great injustice to seem indifferent and impatient. Really I felt the thrill of an inevitable sensation approaching, and—I saw beyond it hypnotizing *copy*. Jack desiderated encouragement, approval—I looked at the clock over my desk and yawned. Surely it was deliberate malice.

"Like that, sir!" Jack clapped his hands loudly; the ruse broke through my affectation, and startled me into attention that he was keen enough to see was as intense as he wished it to be.

"Like that, sir, they hit out at each other, and there was a fight on! Then a husky— Well, a—white-hope you might have called him—bounced in; they knew him, he knew them, and the three chased off in an automobile. I lost 'em, found 'em, and tracked 'em down east Fifty-eighth Street. She had green stars in her hat—things you could hardly see—but they *shone!* I found one on a doorstep—and last night *I watched the house!*"

The typical story teller who at such a juncture lights a cigar, finishes an unsmoked pipe, empties a glass of grog, or rises with unconcealed surprise over his neglect to fulfill an engagement *elsewhere*, could not have surpassed the self-control with which Jack, for the same purpose, intimated his own retirement. He rose, crushing in his thin fingers his poor bleached blue cap, his small sparkling eyes raised to the clock, which a moment before I had

invoked so heartlessly to aid the hypocrisy of my assumed exemption from common weaknesses.

"I think, Mr. Link, it's time for me to see Mr. Force." Mr. Force was an assistant in the press-room.

The rebellious spirit of honesty which I had shamelessly essayed to crush, got decidedly the best of the situation now; behind it was the pressure of my own exorbitant curiosity.

"I think Jack, you'll sit down and finish your story."

Jack sat down.

"There was a vacant or closed house opposite. I perched on the top step of the porch and glued my eyes on No. —. I think, sir, that if any man or woman inside had winked an eye at me from across the street, I'd have seen it. But it wasn't light enough for long to watch trifles, and I just kept looking at the front door and the windows. It was right funny how the lights changed. They broke out first on the second floor, then they dropped to the basement, then they climbed to the third story, down again to the first, but they ended in the attic windows and they stayed there. Everything else was as black as the tomb.

"The wind hustled about a little, splashes of rain hurried along with it, and it grew dark in the street. Once or twice the shades lifted and, Mr. Link"—Jack was a picture of poignant eagerness—"I saw the big peach and her man, the two of the Library steps, just the same as I see you. They'd open the window too and look out together down into the street. I knew why, sir. They expected that limousine—and it came."

The constraint of any position more repressive than sitting to Jack, now on the edge of his exposure could not be imagined. He stood up, moved towards me, the color mounting in his pale cheeks,

his body bent a little forward, and his eyes lighting up with an interior brilliancy that suddenly made me realize Jack might become a good-looking man.

"After that they'd go away from the window farther back; I think they carried a lamp with them for the light would fade away, or else they turned the gas off. At eleven o'clock—I could hear the clock bells from the steeples—the wind was racing and it began to rain hard. I got some shelter under the doorway; the light never left the attic across the street. I felt it all over me, sir, that IT was coming. I'm not sure, I may have fallen asleep, but I came to with a bounce. Lightning was chasing through the sky and the thunder was booming and—the door of No. — was open; the light from the hall flickered over the wet sidewalk, but the shower had passed. The man and the woman both stood there for an instant, then they went in and the door shut with a slam. I thought, sir, I had lost the trail. I never felt worse. I hated them, Mr. Link. Good reason, too." His hands suddenly searched his vest, they were unrewarded; his face grew blank and he dropped his hands helplessly, while a piteous look of consternation and utter despondency shot from his eyes to mine, by this time fully sympathetic and as lustrous as his own.

His glance fell on his hat that lay at his feet on the floor, a flood of revived remembrances followed; he snatched it up, fumbled in its lining and pulled out a scrap of wrinkled paper. The returning sunshine of confidence renewed again the handsome look I had noticed before. He certainly was working up his effects with a remarkable melodramatic insight that was captivating.

"I ran down the steps into the street, I had heard a distant croak of an auto-horn, and on top of it came the toll of one o'clock from a tower. I

had been asleep over an hour. There was no light in No. — except upstairs, as before, in the attic. Then the croak seemed to come from towards the East River, and I saw two balls of light rushing at me. IT WAS THE LIMOUSINE. I started back, and stumbled over a small cobble stone. It looked like an intervention—a message, Mr. Link—who knows? I picked it up, and I pulled out a jack knife I had in my pants. Why? I didn't know, but, sir, they both came in handy.

"The auto sneaked up quiet enough, wheeled round facing East River, and crept in a little to one side of No. —. Mine wasn't the only pair of eyes watching for it. It had hardly grazed the curb when the front door opened and there stood Mephistopheles, behind the beautiful woman, both in the half dark. I knew them, alright. The man came down the steps bareheaded, he carried a short something in his right hand. The sprinkle started again, and a smash of thunder roared overhead, and a clot-like gloom came out of it. Under that cover I dashed over the street like a hare, and crept tight up to the back of the car. In it sat Husky—the peg-top fellow that met 'em in Fifth Avenue—and another man, smaller, and sort of muffled up. The chauffeur in front never stirred from first to last.

"Meph. opened the door; Husky stepped out; he shook the little man. I heard him mutter 'Come out here. Be fly, but quiet, or by God, I'll stick yer through and no compunctions, mind yer.' The bundle inside stirred; I peeped in from behind, a little higher; he was in a black bag or something like it, and as he stooped under the door and stumbled out, the two caught him, lifted him and started up the steps, where the woman leaned forward—it seemed to me she kept clapping her hands together softly as if she couldn't hold in for delight. Then, sir—"

Jack straightened himself, bent back, relaxed, pitched forward with one outstretched arm, projected like a catapult, in front of him, "then, sir, I let fly—not at them—I didn't know who I might hit and anyhow, hit or miss, they'd slipped off through that door quicker'n snakes. That was no use. The cobble stone slammed through the glass side of the limousine, it went through that and split the window opposite. I haven't pitched for the Bogotas for nothing, sir. Before they had time to think, I jabbed my jack knife through the tire and off it went like a mortar. Everything was quiet then up above and the crash and the explosion had the center of the stage, as you people say. I guess it made their hearts jump. They looked around, the woman screamed, and—I screamed—and that chauffeur didn't even turn about. For nerve or sheer fright he had the record. Perhaps at such times, sir, you can't distinguish. Eh?

"Well, they lost their grip on the bundle, for it was a pretty uneasy load to carry now; the interruption perhaps gave the fellow inside some hope. He rolled down the steps onto the pavement like a bag of beans, moving slightly like a strangled dog. I heard Husky's voice, 'Inside, inside with him! Don't stop, swat him,' and then the black scoundrel raised his cudgel and beat the poor creature insensible. I heard him groan where I stood. I was crazy with rage; I felt myself suffocating. I had been shouting, 'Help! Help!' but my voice left me; I discovered that I was very wet, and then a strange vertigo came over me, a pain crossed my chest, and a fire seemed to rage in my throat. I was sick, sir. I am—"

Jack tottered. I caught him, poor fellow; exposure and overstrained emotions had prostrated him. And he was still damp; perhaps breakfastless. I had been thoughtless, but no time was to

be lost. There was an emergency room in the building, and there Jack was hurried. Strengthened with nourishment, and warmed again into animation with stimulants, revived by sleep—he hardly stirred for sixteen hours, so deathlike was his slumber—he just escaped a serious illness. Recuperation was instantaneous; his own mental energy worked wonders and when two days later he returned to the theme of his story hardly a trace of his weakness was betrayed. He was keen to engage in the solution of the midnight mystery and he implored me not to share his discovery with anyone else except the police to whom indeed I had already related Jack's experience. Jack realized that their co-operation was indispensable. It was then he showed me the wrinkled scrap of paper which he had secreted in the lining of his cap, and afterwards stuck in his trousers' pocket, and which I had forgotten.

There was printed on it in pencil, "I am a prisoner. My life is in danger. A. E."

The paper was of the thin and excellent quality used in engineers' pocket tables and handbooks.

It appeared that Jack upon feeling the sudden desertion of his strength had stolen again to the doorway of the empty house opposite No. — and must have drowsed away there the rest of the night, urged apparently by his ineradicable hope of further disclosures. His persistency was rewarded by finding this puzzling and startling bit of evidence. He found it, most remarkably, on the floor of the abandoned limousine.

The car had remained undisturbed all night in the street, and this strange neglect on the part of its previous users could only be explained by the supposition that they feared some unpleasant complications, involving disagreeable explanations with its actual owners, unless they were the owners of it

themselves. Jack crawled over to the car in the earliest hour of the morning before the dawn had yet grown strong enough to make its outlines visible, while night practically covered the street. No. — was dark from basement to attic, not a light shone in it anywhere. He remembered that very distinctly.

He had had an indefinite premonition or fancy that something left behind in the car might be found; clues like that figured in all the romances of detection. He explored with his hands the corners, the cushions, and the floor, when, passing his hand along the edge of the carpet mat covering the floor, it encountered a bit of paper rolled up into a pellet. After the discovery of the writing he went to an owl wagon restaurant, and then hastened to the newspaper office.

But two hours later, when the daylight swept through the city, he returned to Fifty-eighth Street, from a restless feeling of suspicion, and agonized too with the thought of the abused and helpless prisoner. *The auto was gone*, and the mysterious house revealed nothing, with its shades drawn down and its immobile identity with the other sandstone fronts hopelessly complete. If murder dwelt behind its expressionless stories, or some dastardly drama of persecution, extortion, torture, effrontery and crime had been enacted there, no telltale signal betrayed it. And yet to Jack's inflamed imagination it confessed its guilt; somehow to his obsessed eye he saw the meanness of its degradation, as if it shrank away from its orderly and decent neighbors; as if indeed its neighbors frowned upon it. He returned to the office and told me his story.

A newspaper man has the keenest sort of scent for sensation—especially the *yellow* newspaper man, and I fail to recoil from making the confession of

my personal *yellowness* in that respect. He is seldom bewildered by scruples, seldom daunted by danger; he doesn't think of them. He starts the engines of exposure and arrest, and records the result. Half an hour after Jack's story was told Captain B— of the — precinct was closeted with me, and I repeated Jack's adventure.

Jack's description of the three principals in this suspicious criminal alliance was insufficient or inadequate to enable Captain B. to recognize them among the notables of both the under and the upper worlds with whom he was acquainted. I had not then seen the paper Jack found.

"Mr. Link," Captain B. finally said, after a short silence following my communication, "you feel pretty sure of this young fellow, Jack Riddles? The name suggests an equivocal character."

"I feel a good deal surer of him, perhaps, than I do of myself—if you can understand."

"Oh I catch that. Well No. — will be watched night and day for a short time. Your young friend's rather violent exploit may have scared its tenants off. The auto went. Perhaps they went with it. It won't do to break in at once. We must have some evidence of occupation and a line on the occupants that runs straight with Riddles' description."

"But that wretched man? Suppose they kill him. A little less carefulness, Captain, might save him and, under the circumstances, I don't think I'd be squeamish over precedents."

"Oh, that team isn't ready for murder yet—they're not thinking of it. They've kidnapped someone for one reason or another. Bagging him that way showed they wanted something out of him. I'll place them in twelve hours or so, and if they cover the same size Riddles gave I'll take the risk and search the house."

"Of course you'll let us in, Captain, on the ground floor so to speak?"

"Sure! I'll tip you on the first peep we hear. But get that boy on his legs; we'll need him."

It was just a day and a half later that a policeman brought me a sealed envelope. Of course I knew who had sent it. There was no answer the policeman said, and left. I opened the missive expectantly. I was not disappointed. Its contents were more rapturously thrilling to my journalistic hunger for marvels and mysteries, and those labyrinthine prodigies of subterranean deviltry that Cobb, or Ainsworth, or George Sand revelled in, than any mess of crime I had tumbled on *or in*, since Joe Horner, our chief city reporter, went through a hatchway in the Bronx and dropped into a hogshead of claret (Zinfandel) with two dead bodies in it!

Captain B.'s note ran: "Riddles corroborated. They're there; three of them and a squeegee. Up to mischief—perhaps forgery—something like it. Pounce on them tomorrow. We've moved like mice, and the trap has been set quietly. Nothing more simple. Guess you might like to be in at the death. Bring Riddles. We break cover at 11 p.m. Meet at the police station * * *"

Riddles was then on the mend, and when I told him how matters stood, the boy smiled grimly, caught my hand and exclaimed: "Good medicine for me, Mr. Link. I feel it to the end of my toes. That's the tonic I need. Trust me, I'll be with you, strong and hearty." He was.

Captain B. had arranged the affair tactfully. He had conveyed his suspicions to the householder on the west side of No. — and had secured his permission to admit three plain-clothes men through his backyard to the backyard of No. —; also his own party of six, with Riddles and myself as press agents,

onto the roof, whence we expected to effect an entrance through the roof door or skylight, while a few men on the street would intercept flight in that direction. Riddles was radiant; it was a beautiful tribute to his sagacity; all this had come about through his quick insight, his instantaneous sense of obliquity, alias crookedness, when he saw the quarreling pair on the Public Library steps. As we cautiously climbed over the low parapet separating the two roofs, with only the light of the stars to guide us, not altogether appropriately I recalled Jonathan Wild's chase of Thomas Dauell over the housetops, and also the burglary at Dollis Hill in Jack Shepard. There were more apposite occurrences in fiction to compare our maneuvers with, but I thought of these.

I had shown to the Captain the pathetic call for rescue scrawled on the paper scrap. It was palpably written by a foreigner, perhaps a German, certainly someone of Teutonic origin, and the paper had been torn from a book, some such technical guide for engineers as I had suggested. It did not interest Captain B. greatly. He told me, before we started out, that the "peg-top" man—a Hercules—the beautiful woman and "Mephistopheles" had all been seen, and no one else, but that dark ruby glass, identical he thought with that used by photographers, had been inserted in the front attic windows, where he suspected the imprisoned man was kept at work in some nefarious trade, from which the trio derived support or profit. As to the criminal character of "the bunch" he had no doubts. The two men almost invariably carried bundles into the house, but none out.

We were at the doorway of a little triangular erection which covered the stairway leading from the roof to the attic and our approach, in rubbers, had been almost noiseless. The door was shut, but

only locked; the precautions against invasion had been forgotten or overlooked. It was not even bolted. Evidently the conspirators or counterfeiters, or whatever they were, apprehended nothing; we might catch them red handed. A stout chisel enabled us to force the door inward, and a dark lantern revealed a dilapidated stairway below, ending in a kind of storage room, cluttered up with the refuse of successive occupancies, a dangerously inflammable chaos of rubbish, in which a feebly sputtering match could create a conflagration before it was suspected. It required some discrimination to cross this *debris* without starting some crumbling avalanche of fragments in the boxes, baby carriages, stoves, chairs, trunks, picture frames, racks and easels. As it was, with our best efforts slides occurred, and the mastodon-like tread of the detectives sank noisily through an occasional bandbox. We paused anxiously—I did, at least—at such moments, but the crash, so it sounded to me, brought no response. I reasoned the house must be vacant, and that our quarry had escaped.

We found that a closed door opened upon a narrow hallway, and as we softly drew it back loud voices most unexpectedly became audible, certainly proceeding from the front rooms of that very floor; from that front room wherein Jack had noticed the light, and where the detectives reported the insertion of the ruby panes. A hoarse dominant swelled up in the excited conversation. Jack leaned towards me and whispered "That's Husky"; Captain raised a warning finger, and we filed out, one by one, gingerly tiptoeing toward the room which now unquestionably contained the objects of our search. The familiar scare or thrill which submerges all lesser emotions, as the danger point in an encounter is approached, decidedly manifested itself somewhere in my anatomy, or probably all over it.

Any mental analysis of my feelings was abruptly halted by the threats or altercation now heard very clearly in the room before us.

We had reached the door, beneath which a streak of light gave a penumbral illumination to the end of the little hallway. Below, in the house itself, absolute silence reigned, and apparently as complete darkness. Our approach was unnoticed. The excitement or rage that overpowered the speaker, breaking out in threats that now became intelligible and startled us into a fierce impatience to interfere, had certainly stopped his ears. The suffocation of anger had made him deaf.

"Damn you—you'll show us the trick, or else your starved and scorched body will take the consequences. We know well enough you can do it. You've led us on with blind promises, but now we've got you where we want you. You can't get out of this, remember, until we get what we want. Can you understand?"

"And then you'll kill, I suppose?" The voice was strained, thick, foreign in accent, and low.

Riddles stretched himself up to my ear again and whispered "A. E.?" I nodded assent.

"No! No! Oh, no; but—you must not stay here." The voice was a woman's. "We'll take care of you. Nicely too, Diaz, I guess. We'll keep you where you won't tell tales." A mean, cynical laugh followed, a muttered corroboration from a third person, who had evidently crossed the room. It was this last voice that continued the harangue of the prisoner in a smooth, polished, plausible manner that thinly veiled its heartlessness; its crafty insinuation betrayed a designing selfishness, but it seemed welcome after the barking hoarseness and ferocity of its predecessor, and the cruelty of that feminine sneer. Its climax came at the close with

a threat of fiendish wickedness that broke the tension of our restraint.

"Alfred Erickson, perhaps you can understand your predicament a little better, if you will stop to think it over. You are a stranger here, and you are in our power. That, you probably realize pretty well by this time. There is something else you may not so clearly comprehend, and that is, we are not afraid of consequences, because in your case, so far as we are concerned, there will be no consequences! You can extricate yourself easily enough if you will be sensible. Obstinacy has its merits under some circumstances; your perseverance in your Arctic experiences was rewarded—and we know exactly how—but obstinacy is of no avail just now, and no rescuing party from Norway, or even from the New York police will save you from, perhaps, an unfortunate calamity."

This allusion appealed facetiously to the others, and there arose a musical outburst of laughter from the lady, with an accompaniment of harsh bass grunts from the first speaker. The voice continued:

"You possess a secret that the whole world has been hunting for, and we propose that the world will go on hunting for it before you will ever be able to tell it. Share with us and, under reservations, you will be well cared for. Refuse and, as we have gone so far, we will find—and you too—the rest of the way very simple. You're not at this moment likely to be able to help yourself. That little incident outside," Riddles nudged me again, "meant nothing. You're as much buried alive in this attic in the first city of the world, as if you occupied a tomb of the Pharaohs. We're not as self-controlled as you seem to be. We may get restless. Then, sir"—we heard him step forward; I imagined him leaning close to his victim, for it

was evident the man was in some way confined—"then, sir, up you go—you and your secret—in smoke."

His smothered rage broke out then, and we heard him strike the man and curse him. There was the remonstrance of a cry—that was all. The next instant we would have forced our way through a stone wall had we been against it, but Captain B. raised his hand. His trained endurance amazed me. The voice resumed:

"Now what do you propose to do?"

"Yes, what?" from the first ruffian.

We held our breaths and listened with all our ears.

"Let me get up. Let me talk this over with you. You are driving me crazy! I can't think. I will forget what you say I know. You—"

"Hell with your parleying. I'll untie your tongue. I guess your memory will work quick enough after this"; it was Husky threatening.

Then succeeded the jeering encouragement of the woman and, strange paradox, the voice was rich, enticing, but mocking.

"Oh, yes; just a little stimulation will hurry up matters. Diaz we can't wait much longer and," the menad fury broke loose, "if this miserable creature holds out much longer we shall be ruined. Burn him—burn him—scald it out of him, Huerta; the dolt, simpleton, idiot—"

There was a shuffling movement inside, the sudden bristling, rushing sound of an airblast (Could it be a naphtha lamp?) and then a raving, rending, terrifying cry, something that meant fear and rage and madness, the awful, marrow-chilling shriek of insanity.

Quicker than thought a man behind me shoved us aside. He raised an iron mallet; it struck the door with a splintering crash—another and another

—the door burst inwards, torn from its lock, torn from its hinges, and we all rushed forward. I heard a shot, then another; the group in front of me parted and an extraordinary scene was revealed, one I can never forget. A huge broad-shouldered man was crumpled upon the floor. There had fallen from his hand a thick, long soldering iron; it had been red or white hot; fallen on the floor it was burning into the boards, and little swinging flames encircled it. Near at hand was the large form of a plumber's furnace with the blue whistling flame still shooting from it. Huddled in a corner, cowering behind a menacing man—quickly subdued, however, by a pointed revolver—was the beautiful woman, a half dishevelled creature in a deep yellow wrap, fastened a little distance below her peerless throat by a big turquoise brooch. Her abundant hair had become loosened, and it poured over her shoulders in a raven tide.

The man in front of her was Riddles' Mephistopheles. He was pale, and the pallor hardly became him. Although strikingly handsome it gave a peculiar expression to his face, of craven hate and sinister fear, if that can be understood. In both his and the woman's eyes shone a horrible surprise. But the overpowering object in the room was the half-naked figure of a man with extended arms and divergent legs, strapped to a narrow table by iron bands. These latter passed over his wrists and ankles, and were actually screwed to the table. His face was not readily deciphered; whiskers covered his chin, a high forehead beneath overhanging light hair and a large mouth formed together the suggestion of a very dignified and intelligent face. His condition was heart-rending; bruises covered his body, one eye seemed swollen and shut, and scars—I shuddered at the thought of their having been caused by the iron in the hands of

of the prostrate fiend—marked the white but defaced skin of his shoulders and arms.

There was little furniture in the room—the tortured man had probably been kept on the table at night—a few chairs, a second table, and towards the front of the room a long table covered with a confusion of physical apparatus. It was the work of a minute to search the criminals, and to handcuff them; though the woman cried bitterly at the degradation Captain B. was taking no chances, and then the liberation of the pitiable victim of these inhuman miscreants was effected. The stiffness of his limbs almost forbade movement, and he cried with pain—and for that matter I am sure with joy too—as we tenderly raised him, lifted him into a chair, and tried to relax the rigid muscles. His agony, crucified so on his back, must have been incalculable; evidently his resolute refusal had driven his tormentors furious, and made them incarnate demons. But what was it—the SECRET? Reader, you are not to know, except as you find it out yourself, by reading this almost incredible story.

With our prisoners—the Hercules was carried out; his femur had been split by the Captain's bullet and he was in desperate pain—we made our way down through the house. There seemed to be only two rooms showing any signs of habitation, two rooms on the second floor used as bedrooms, and their furnishment was a droll mixture of bareness and luxury. Shreddy and hanging wallpaper, a superb rug or so, a sumptuous easy chair, and then wooden kitchen chairs, plain bedsteads, but a bureau or toilet table covered with jewel boxes, and in a corner odds and ends of silver utensils, heaped up into quite a noticeable hillock. Was it these that the men had been seen carrying so constantly into the house? Our prying about uncovered some

decanters of wine incongruously stowed away in a pantry below a washbasin. Their contents helped Erickson, and some of the rest helped themselves.

Riddles had been gloating over the capture of his game; his eyes never left the sullen, downcast face of Mephistopheles, distorted too at moments with angry scowls, nor the disturbed shadowed splendor of the woman's countenance. At an unguarded instant Mephistopheles sprang out of the hold of his captors, and brought his clenched, handcuffed wrists down on the head of Jack, who promptly dropped.

"You dirty little fox, you did this. I know now. I've seen you hanging about here. I'll mark you! I'll mark you! I'll tear your liver and heart out yet. Oh, I don't forget. Diaz never forgets."

He was jerked back into decorum and silence, and somewhat injuriously rebuked as well, but a little scar, bare of hair, was to remain as a memento of his regard for Jack Riddles for many a long year afterwards.

I bargained successfully with Captain B. for the possession of Erickson, and I took him home in a taxi, greatly to my journalistic bliss. He was pretty dangerously ill for days; the nervous breakdown was dreadful. He raved and shouted and was almost maniacal in his outbreaks. It was the natural reaction of a powerful mind and nature against the circumstances of his degradation and insult. But he finally came round all right, the glow of health covered his cheeks, and his earnest eyes welcomed me with sanity and gratitude. Then he told me his story, in two parts. The first part explained the predicament in which we found him here in New York, the second—Well, the reader has it before him in this volume, exactly as it appeared in the daily issue of the *New York Truth Getter*.

A few words more to explain Mr. Erickson's equivocal, abject position in New York, as we found him, and this Editorial Note will no longer restrain the puzzled and vexed subscriber. These words will be very few indeed, and may indeed prove very unsatisfactory. Yet they will conveniently make a skeleton framework or outline for deductions, with which the reader may fill its expressionless and yawning blanks, after the gift of his imagination or the bias of his temperament, upon reading the ensuing narrative.

Alfred Erickson reached San Francisco from the Arctic Exploration, herein circumstantially described. In San Francisco he formed, rather rapidly, the acquaintance of Angelica Sigurda Tabasco, and Diaz Ilario Aguadiente. There were mutual prepossessions. Mr. Erickson also fascinated his new friends by certain wonderful claims, which were however partially supported by ocular demonstration. They all came to New York. In New York Mr. Erickson came to grief. He had come too far from the base of his operations, and he suffered from a complicated treatment. We rescued him from its worst effects. I think that is all. I will not trust myself to say more for fear of my own remorse over misleading statements. Angelica and Diaz were never prosecuted. Erickson was afraid to tell his story before he wrote his book (this book), and we all agreed he acted wisely from a commercial standpoint, and the police so impressed Angelica and Diaz with their—the police's—contiguity under any and all circumstances, in this country anywhere, anyhow, that they left it. And Jack's "Husky" turned out to be a hardened photographed and historic criminal, who had played the heavy villain in the little mystery under the same impelling motive that animated the minds and tongues of Angelica and Diaz. He had also

captivated this captivating pair by blandishments less peculiar than beauty, and he had wound up Alfred Erickson into the tightest kind of a knot of physical embarrassments, from whose Gordian embrace Erickson had been delivered through the intervention of the very humble instrument of Fate, Jack Riddles.

"Husky's" name eluded determination for a while, but was revived through his own inadvertence in talking in his sleep, wherein the confession transpired of his having "done up" Blue Brigsy at a time when he himself carried the soubriquet of "Monitor Dick." The clue was slight; it proved sufficient, and landed him in Sing Sing for a quarter of a century.

Jack Riddles was "lifted." He was taken out of the proletariat, the pages, office boys and messengers, and placed among the police reporters, where he was duly taken in hand under instruction to acquire the current cursorial gait and speed of the slam-bang reportorial style. He will get it. This relieves the situation created by Riddles' opportune circumspection from the top of the Fifth Avenue 'bus.

The reader, albeit he may demur at the jejune skipping around the explanation of the mystery at No. — east Fifty-eighth Street, has hereby had the situation sufficiently cleared to feel himself ready to enjoy Erickson's story, and I assure him, he may look forward with expectancy to find the residue, or the heart, of that mystery resolved at, let me say, page 400 or thereabouts, assuming that by that time he cares any more about it. So that, pleasantly impelled by the spur of curiosity, as regards a secret yet undivulged, let him accept our editorial invitation—Does he not see our obeisance, and the sweep of our hand pointing to a door opening upon unimaginable wonders?—to peruse the history of a

voyage more marvelous than that of Marco Polo, of Father Huc, of Mandeville, of Munchausen, of Sinbad, the Aethiopics of Heliodorus, of Ariosto, of Gulliver, of Ulysses, of Peter Wilkins, of Camoens, of Pomponius Mela.

Sive per Syrtes iter aestuosas,
Sive facturus per inhospitalem
Caucasum, vel quae loca fabulosa
Lambit Hydaspes

His unappeased wonder over a bit of unraveled criminality will vanish in the excitement of discovery, of adventure, of revelation, but at the other end, as the book drops from his hand, finished and admired, he will approve our reticence at this end, for then he will know HOW Erickson got into his difficulty, and WHY.

Erickson's story was published in the *New York Truth Getter*—of course the reader never saw it there—prepared from his verbal narrative, his notes, and memoranda, and so expressed in English as to retain the glow, enthusiasm, amazement, and graphic delineation of the original. It was told to me in my library overlooking the sunlit tides around Throg's Neck; in the short winter afternoons at times, at times through the long winter evenings, with Erickson hanging over the hearth where, as Max Beerbohm puts it, "gradually the red-gold caverns are revealed, gorgeous, mysterious, with inmost recesses of white heat." Past all dreams of wizardry, more remote from thought than any visions of magic, stranger than the hallucinations of invention, was this picture of the unreal and terraced world descending in titanic steps to the heated regions of the earth's mass, peopled with an impossible people, alive with animal abundance and clothed in the vestal glory of innumerable plants. In it were enacted those

transmutations which Science predicts as the last triumph of human knowledge, and in it a wealth transcending the maddest hopes of Avarice had accumulated in an Acropolis of SOLID GOLD!

There in the frozen north, walled in by ice, hidden in fogs, almost impenetrably concealed or protected by storm, lay this incredible continent of wonders, unsuspected by the world of one thousand million people around it, the goal of whose ambition it had already reached, the course of whose evolution it illustrates, and who had, in these latest years, begun to grope blindly for its guessed at shores.

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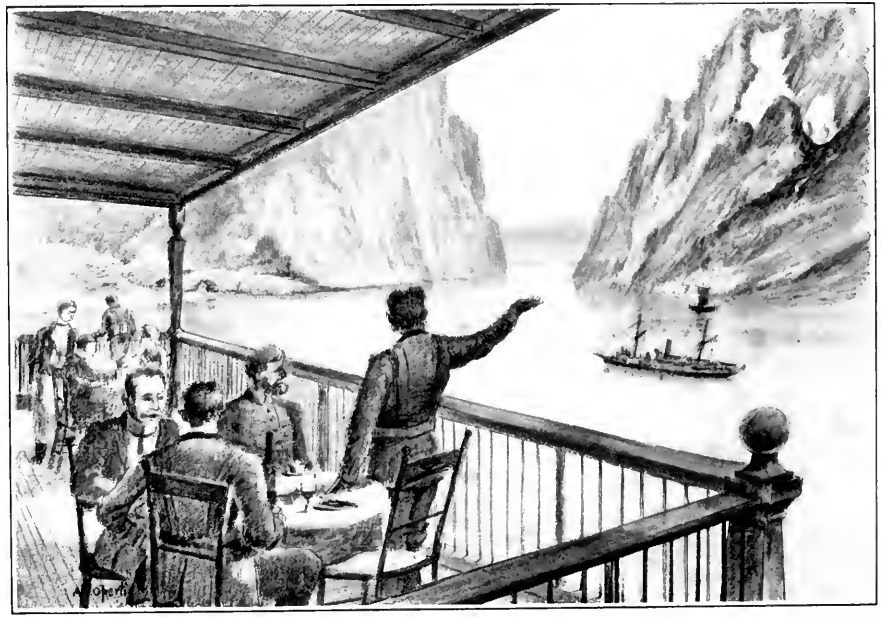


THE FIORD

CHAPTER I

The Fiord

How well I remember it! The solemn, beautiful fiord, framed within the pine tressed walls, flecked with patches of sunlight, where its waters glistened with beryl hues. Shaded in the recesses of the cliffs where the lustreless flood softly murmured with the faintest rhythmic cadence against the rocky rims, immobile and caressed as they had been for hundreds of thousands of years, and in a few places yielding slowly to decay in shingled beaches. And the music of nature united with the appeal to the eyes of color and form, to entrance the visitor.

A rushing brook singing like a girl hurrying to some holiday joy, broke from the highlands, a silvery thread, then a braid of pearls, then a sloping cataract of splintered and rainbowed waves, then in silence for a while, catching its breath, as the girl might catch it, for a new descent, and then the renewed song, through a tiny gorge, its jubilation softened to a murmur, and then the flash and chorus of its outspread ripples as it leaped into the fiord. And that was the light soprano of the music around us, and under it rolled the bass notes, muted and *sfuggendo*, of the distant waterfall—*foss*—at the inland head of the fiord, and towards which were even then starting the pleasure boats, launches and steam yachts of the tourists.

The sense of smell contributed its intoxication to

the charmed surrender of eye and ear, for there was flung down from the tree-crowned cliffs the scent of wild flowers and the clean, resinous odors of the spruce. The wind singing, too, like a chord accompaniment to the cheerful ballad of the brook, and the heavy recitative of the waterfall, brought this fragrance to us, even as it swept in capricious rushes outward over the fiord to its gateway, through which the distant sea lay motionless like a blazoned shield, beyond the *Skargaard*.

A shelf of land, dropping off in a slope to the waters of the fiord and pierced by a roadway whose climbing curves led at last to the summit of the cliffs, and which ended on the shore in a dock, then gay with the summer glories of young girls and men, held the picturesque red houses of a few farmers, and the wandering walls of the comfortable hotel. The brilliant green of the cut lawn, like an enameled sheath, covered the little tableland, and venturesome tongues and ribbons ran flame-wise up crannies, ledges and narrow glades, to be lost in the shadows of the firs and the sprayed and silken birches high above.

Round a table on the broad piazza of the hotel, in an angle where we looked straight through the eyelet of the rocks to the sleeping ocean, a gold-backed monster like a leviathan covering the earth, slumberously heaving in the sun, I was sitting with three companions.

There was my best friend, Antoine Goritz, a man thickly bearded, with a broad, unwrinkled brow sparingly topped by light wisps of straggling hair, with a straight Teutonic nose, deep-set blue eyes under carven ivory lids, beneath eyebrows deeper tinted than his hair, and with a physical frame, strong, massive, large, effective, perhaps a trifle overdrawn in its suggestion of muscular power.

It was a titan mould, but the face above it was

humorously still and observant. I often compared him to Sverdrup, Nansen's captain, but he was a bigger man. Like him he possessed the docility of a child, the energy of a giant. Slow of speech ordinarily, as he was slow of movement, but in stress and excitement convulsed with his rapid, headlong utterance, and rising to a momentum of action that was irresistible and swift. He sat upright in a thick brown plaid with a blue sailor's scarf around his broad neck and a straw hat like a coracle on his head.

Next to him sat Professor Hlmath Bjornsen, a very tidy man of ordinary build and stature, but oddly distinguishable by his abundant red hair, the crab-like protuberance of his eyes (he wore no glasses), his indented lips, which looked as if stitched up in sections, also undisguised by any covering of hair, his patulous, projecting ears. His homeliness was saved by the merit of cheerfulness at least, by a pug nose, a rosy complexion and a demure, winning sort of smile that was generally *a propos* of nothing, but was retained habitually as nature's protective grace against the premature prejudices of first acquaintances. Professor Bjornsen was a man learned in rocks, minerals, mines, geology, the hard and motionless properties of the earth. He was scrupulously neat, and his frequent inspection of himself, especially his hands, was equally disconcerting and amusing.

Spruce Hopkins was the next man, alongside of myself, and probably he would have been the first man whom an approaching stranger would have looked at the longest, and concerned himself with knowing the most. He was a Yankee, an American of Americans, but of that Grecian phase which rejects *toto-coelo*, the newspaper type, the Brother Jonathan caricature, the cheap idiosyncracies of the paragraph writer, unassimilable even with the more credible picture,

of one who wisely schemed
And hostage from the future took,
In trained thought and lore of book.
Large-brained, clear-eyed—of such as he
Shall Freedom's young apostles be.

Spruce Hopkins boasted no particular thrills. His thoughts followed really a rather narrow gauge, and he could weigh with premature or precocious carefulness the two sides of a practical question when his decision would have halted perhaps at alternatives involving the emotions.

He had a superb figure, graceful, plastic, and eloquent of strength. His face leaned, so to speak, a little to the Brahmin type, but any introspection it might have accompanied or suggested was lost in the radiance of the eyes, the tempting sweetness of his smile, the full-blown glory of his infectious laughter, the spiced offerings of his genial tongue, the crisp charm of his wavy, glossy, chestnut-tinted hair, and that slight but irreducible *soupcon* of swagger which gave him distinction.

And then there was myself; you see me, a hardy man (a blush rose to Erickson's cheeks; he could not overcome some apprehension of my recalling his recent humiliation), a sailor man with a little land schooling, loving yarns, telling yarns, and—believing 'em.

"Why, yes, Erickson," I interrupted, "I suppose you have been quite willing to believe some gilded tales that those friends, your late companions here in New York, told you, but even a captivating gullibility hardly explains how a young giant like you were found on your back, strapped to a table, and about to be skewered like a spitted pig."

"Ah, sir, patience. You shall know all, but—at the end, at the end; even if I could resist a plausible story, I could not always resist what goes with a good story."

"SCHNAPPS?" I interjected.

"Please, sir, patience. It is worth while. I have seen what no living man— Perhaps I shall never see again my fellow travelers, the three who sat with me on the hotel porch three years ago." He bent his head, his bruised, rough hand was passed over his face, and I thought a flare of flame, shot from a cleaving coal, showed on it the glistening trail of moisture. "—what no living man has ever seen, a country more wonderful than dreams or legends or fairy stories have described or painted. Oh, sir, in that new world in the north, something of the imagery of the mythology of my forefathers seems repeated; very vaguely indeed. There I have seen Nilfheim, I have seen Hwergelmer and Muspelheim, the world of fire and light, but different, yes very different, and perhaps— Well, no, not Valhalla, but something like Yggdrasill, and if it was not Gladsheim, what was it?"

He resumed.

It was Professor Bjornsen speaking, with his big hands clutching his head on either side, buried indeed in the luxuriant wealth of his ruddy hair, with his staring eyes fixed on the table as if he saw through it, looking at the land of his prophecies, while we all listened, with our eyes measuring the cliffs up to the green fringes that ran, a dark zone against the sky, on their sun-blazed peaks.

"Signs, signals, came to the explorers of Europe long before Columbus set his face westward; long before, standing at the peak of his little caravel, he dared the perils and the powers of the bewitched western ocean, the woods and weeds of Cipango floated to the shores of Europe. There are signs and signals now, gentlemen"; the Professor brought his long fingers down with a smart, startling slap on the table that brought our own hands nervously to the sides of the unsupported glasses,

lest they capsize in his assault of enthusiasm, while his disordered hair flamed aureole-like over his bulging forehead, beneath which smiled exultantly his piercing green eyes.

"Signs that an untouched continent is hidden in the uncharted wastes of the western Arctic Sea. A vast area of waters, a blank space on the map lies there, but that is simply the refuge, for cartographic lucidity, of our ignorance. What really lies there is reciprocal on the west of Greenland on the east, of the Franz Josef Archipelago and Spitzbergen north of us. There is there another large fragment of that original circumpolar continent that Science, in a moment of intuitional certainty, points to as the source of the world's animal and vegetable life. And the signs? You ask me, your faces do, what they are. They are negative indeed but they are convincing. Payer reached 82°5′ North Latitude, on an island, Crown Prince Rudolf's Land, and still further north he thought he could see an extensive tract of land in 83°. He called it Petermann's Land. Driftwood on the east of Greenland comes from Siberia, circuitously perhaps around the pole, not across it, since the 'Fram' drifted from the north of Cape Chelyuskin in 1893 to north of Spitzbergen in 1896. The wood is Siberian larch and alder and poplar. Articles from the American ship 'Jeannette,' which foundered near Bennett Island, had taken the same course, being picked up on the east coast of Greenland. Professor Mohr held that they drifted over the pole. Why did not the 'Fram' drift over the pole? The set of the waters that way is obstructed, and that obstruction is a continental mass. Nothing surer.

"Dr. Rink has reported a throwing stick, used by the Eskimos in hurling their bird darts, not like those used by the Eskimos of Greenland, and attribu-

ted by him to the natives of Alaska. The path traversed by this erratic could not have been directly eastward from Alaska, threading an impenetrable and devious outlet in the Canadian archipelago, neither was it over the pole, as any pathway there would, constructively, have reached northern and not eastern Greenland. Again that invisible obstruction, as patent, as real, as the influence of the undiscovered Neptune in the perturbations of Uranus, which led Leverrier and Adams to make their prophetic directions for its detection.

"Sir Allen Young, appreciating the nucleal density of the land towards the pole, and speaking of Nansen's promised attempt to drift over it, said, 'I think the great danger to contend with will be the land in nearly every direction near the pole. Most previous navigators seem to have continued to see land, again and again farther and farther north.'

"Peary has seen Krocker Land. Over the western verge of the horizon its peaks rose temptingly to invite him to new conquests. That was a segment, a tiny fraction, a mere hint of the unknown vastnesses beyond. But the most convincing symptoms—Ah, a feeble word to designate a fact—of this continent are the observations of the United States' meteorologists. Dr. R. A. Harris, a competent authority, has shown that the tides, mute but eloquent witnesses, testify to its existence. The diurnal tides along the Asiatic and North American coasts are not what they would be if an uninterrupted sweep over the Arctic Sea prevailed. Their progress is delayed and along narrow channels is accelerated or heightened, as past the shores of Grant Land. Why? Again that undiscovered country."

"Harris, a clever fellow. Met him in Washington just two years ago this autumn—a crackerjack

at mathematical guessing. The way he can figure and run off a reel of equations on anything from the rate sawdust makes in a wood mill to a mensuration of the average dimensions of turnips is surprising. If he says Krocker Land is there—why, then I guess IT IS," was Spruce Hopkins' comment, while we all turned our eyes from the cliffs to catch the Professor's rejoinder, and Goritz leaned towards him, fixing him with those luminous orbs of his that betrayed his suppressed excitement.

"What does this man Harris say?" asked Goritz.

"He says," answered Bjornsen, thrusting his hands in his pockets after he had looked them over in his habitual manner of inspection, "he says this. The diurnal tide occurs earlier at Point Barrow than at Flaxman Island; the diurnal tide or wave does not have approximately its theoretical value; at Bennett Island, north of Siberia, and at Teplitz Bay, Franz Josef Land, the range of the diurnal wave has about one-half of the magnitude which the tidal forces acting over an uninterrupted Arctic basin would produce; the average rise and fall at Bennett Island is 2.5 feet, but the rise and fall of the semi-daily tide is 0.4 at Point Barrow, and 0.5 feet at Flaxman Island. And he makes this point." The Professor drew a red chalk from his vest pocket, stood up, and pushing our glasses aside, drew a squarish outline, broader on one side, with a tail standing out at its lower right-hand corner. He drew a circle a little above its long side, and scribbled Pole within it, then a jagged scrawl to either side, representing the coasts of Asia and America, with an indentation like a funnel for Behring Straits.

"He points out that the 'Jeannette', an American ship sent out by the proprietors of the *New York Herald*, stuck in the ice here", he jabbed his

crayon, which crumbled into grains under his pressure, to one side of a projecting point of the outline, "and that the ice drift carried her eastward"; he made a flourish under the fascinating trapezoid that we now understood embodied the suggested continent; "while the 'Fram' stuck here," again a red splotch above the diagram, "and was carried westward toward Greenland. Again why? Because at a critical point between their two positions the ice current is divided by the influence of a terminal promontory of Krocker Land. It splits, so to speak, the trend over the pole of the ice drift, turning one arm of it eastward, the other westward. His creative vision goes farther. A point of this new land lies just north of Point Barrow in Alaska, that causes the westward tide at the point; and he thinks it is distant from Point Barrow five or six degrees of latitude, 350 to 420 miles. Harris claims the ice in Beaufort Sea, north of Canada, here—"Another flaming signal was scrawled on the white tablecloth below the right hand corner of the fascinating outline that now, assuming a magical premonition of some great geographical reality, kept our eyes fastened on it almost as if it might sprout before us with mimic mountains and ice fields.

"Harris says that the ice in Beaufort Sea does not drift freely northward, and is remarkable for its thickness and its age. He says the ice does not move eastward, for you see," the Professor flung his hands over the cryptogram on the tablecloth like an exorcising magician, "you see Beaufort Sea is a sea, land-locked by Krocker Land, that here approaches Banks Island. Are you convinced?"

We looked at each other a trifle slyly and disconcertedly, and Goritz laughed, but it was Spruce Hopkins who suddenly turned to the Professor, caught his arm and held him for a moment without

speaking but with his face yielding slowly to some growing impression of wonder within him until he became quite grave.

"You see, Professor, I feel about this thing this way. I guess you're not far wrong about this new land; it's exciting enough to think of it. I calculated there was room up there for a little more glory after I heard your lecture before the Philosophical Society at Christiania last November; glory for some of us, such as Peary and Amundsen, Scott, Shackleton, Nansen, Stefansson, have won, and I thought it over. I fell in with Erickson and Goritz at Stockholm and we canvassed the matter, sort o' stuck our heads together and thought it out; then we sent for you, and the demonstration seems straight enough. Some rigmarole! Don't get angry Professor, that's my way and, anyhow, I'm not going back on you, not so much as the thickness of a flea's ear, and I think you'll allow that can't count; but the more I looked at the matter the more I wondered if there was anything about it the least bit more substantial than glory.

"And that wasn't all, either. I think I'd like to get back again."

"Yes, Professor," it was Goritz speaking, with his head tilted back, as he followed the scurrying flight of sparrows amid the tasseled larches of the opposite *gaard*, "dead bodies are rather indifferent to glory. If we are great enough to get there, we we must be great enough to get back. It would be no consolation for us to have our relatives and friends sing;

'Sa vandra vara stora man
Fran ljuset ned til skuggan.' " *

Hopkins smiled; he was neither hurt nor confused. He shook his head assentingly, and his

*Thus our great men wander from the light down into the shades.

faint drawl prolonged itself somewhat in his mocking rejoinder:

"That's all right, Goritz. As a corpse you probably would attract a little more notice than either Erickson or myself, but buried fathoms deep in an Arctic sea, or just rolled over by a nameless glacier in this nameless land, your own chances for a newspaper obituary might shrink to very small proportions. You might not even have your dimensions mentioned."

Goritz looked approvingly at the American, and benignantly raised his hat and bowed.

But the impatient Professor was in his chair, his hands spread out before him; his smile had vanished, his encroaching eyes had retreated, his serrated lips were puckered, his eyebrows frowned, and altogether he assumed such a sudden portentousness of suppressed eagerness and concealed thought that we rocked with delight and the momentary restraint was forgotten. And with our laughter there stole back into the Professor's face its usual smile, but it had enigmatically deepened into a sort of mute expostulation.

"Listen," he said, and he waved his hands, inviting us to a closer attention; his voice fell; I thought his peering eyes glanced to either side to avert the proximity of eavesdroppers. "There is good reason to believe that this new world of the north is neither inclement nor barren. I believe it is a place of wonders; in it rest secrets, REVELATIONS." There was now a sorcery in the Professor's voice that made us lean toward him, drawing the circle a little closer, like conspirators over an incantation. "What they are no once can tell. You ask, Why? I believe this. I can hardly explain; my faith in this is a growth, a coalescence of many strands of feeling and many lines of study. My conviction is complete. I admit that extrinsi-

cally, as I may say, it is unreasonable; intrinsically it is now as inexpugnable as a theorem from Euclid, or the evidence of my own senses.

"That there is a new world south of the pole is maintained by Science; it is the unalterable belief of the explorers, the hydrographers, the geographers. But what may that world be like? What was it like? Long millions and millions of years before our time the Arctic north was the procreant cradle of ALL LIFE! From it streamed the currents of animal and vegetable creation; it was warm; forests of palms flourished along river and lake-side, and within them roamed the creatures of tropical or semi-tropical climates. Paleontologists from Saporta to Wieland, from Keerl to Heer have pointed this out, with an emphasis that has varied with temperament or knowledge, from conviction to surmise. G. Hilton Scribner, a clever American *litterateur* says"—the Professor ludicrously grasped for something in an inner coat pocket and revealed a little book, exquisitely bound, of scraps and extracts, and read from a page whose smoothness he had marred by folding a leaf—"he says, 'thus the Arctic zone, which was earliest in cooling down to the first and highest heat degree in the great life-gamut was also the first to become fertile, first to bear life, and first to send forth her progeny over the earth.'

"And Wieland, a remarkable Yale scholar, an authority on fossil cycads and Chelonia, the latest to speculate authoritatively along this line, writes" —another creased page was turned to—" 'in a word, that the great evolutionary *Schauplatz* was boreal is possible from the astronomical relations, probable from physical facts, and rendered an established certainty by the unheralded synchronous appearance of the main groups of animals and plants on

both sides of the great oceans throughout post-Paleozoic time.' "

"But Professor," it was my remonstrance that now interrupted him, "that was millions of years ago. It's a dead world up there. Surely you don't think—"

The Professor broke in with a deprecatory gesture of regret at his own impatience. "I know. True, true, for the most part, but perhaps not for all—not for all. It's a deep matter."

Professor Bjornsen's eyes were glistening with enthusiasm; his manner became extravagantly mysterious, and his words boiled out feverishly from his scarred lips. "The north, to whose enchantment the whole world bows; a strange, magical region, lit by the supernal splendors of heavenly lights, and wrapped in eternal snows, was the Eden of our race. It was that *navel* of the world related in all mythologies from India to Greece, from Japan to Scandinavia; it was the Paradisaic earth center, the fecund source of every manner of life, endowed by the Creator with original unrestrained powers of exuberance. Here man originated; here was his primal home, here his first estate, dressed as he was in every faculty of mind, and enriched by all the gifts of nature. As President Warren, another American, eloquently wrote twenty-six years ago—"

Again the Professor dove into his pocket, produced his amazing little scrapbook, while we all gazed at the excited gentleman with a new fascination and astonishment. Here was the man of crystals and mensuration, of ores, adits, drifts and strata, riding the high horse of mystical and religious analogy, and somehow we felt ourselves drawn into the vortex of his cerebral excitement! We were quite dazed in a way, and yet felt an elation that kept us spellbound.

"Ah, here it is. He wrote, President Warren, 'the pole symbolizes Cardo, Atlas, Meru, Haraberezaiti, Kharsak-Kurra, every fabulous mountain on whose top the sky pivots itself, and around which all the heavenly bodies ceaselessly revolve.'

"Assume this; assume that here the finger of God first impressed this insensate whirling globe of unconscious matter with the touch and promise of life and Mind. Is it likely that all vestiges, all signs, all remainders of that consecrated first endowment should have quite disappeared, succumbed ingloriously to the stiffening embrace of cold, congealed in an eternal sleep beneath the glaciers and the snows? I think not, my friends, *I think not.*"

"But," it was the protesting voice of Goritz who now voiced our incredulity, "haven't the expeditionists, the geographers, the explorers—hasn't everything we have been told, everything we have read, all we know about it, and that's a good deal, from Franklin to Peary made it clear that at the pole there is nothing but death, desolation, and ice?"

"Antoine!" Here the Professor turned abruptly to the big Dane, thrusting his umbrageous crown of red hair almost into the thin locks of his friend, and whispered hoarsely, "Ah! Antoine, the secrets are hidden in that uncharted land beyond the ice packs north of Point Barrow. The reservations of life are there. You have all heard," the rufous glory now moved towards Hopkins and myself, "of Symmes Hole? Of course you shrug your shoulders; it was preternatural simplicity you say, the mad dream of a fool, uproariously derided. Yes! Symmes was not a fool; he was a brave man, a soldier, chasing a reality through the distortions of an hallucination. There is *no* hole; the earth is not hollow, but—there is a depression; there must

be. The depression is at the North Pole somewhere. It has not been found, and the Arctic seas have been *parcourired* by explorers, as you notice, Goritz. The depression is Krocker Land. If profound its climate is temperate. Life, the remnants of its first evolutionary phases, may be there—but mark me!" The Professor positively dilated, everything in him enlarged as if his bounding heart sent fuller currents of blood to all its outposts; his eyes were refulgent; I thought they were an emerald green; his hair rose in the thrill of his vaticination and his mouth opened into a vast exclamatory *rictus*, in which flashed his big white incisors like diminutive tusks. "Mark me, there too will be found the last evolutionary phases of the human race!"

Here was a climax, and the mental stupifaction of the Professor's audience was exactly reflected in the prolonged silence that ensued. It was entertaining, however, to watch Spruce Hopkins' fixed, expressionless perusal of the Professor's face, and the immobile glory in the Professor's answering stare. Hopkins spoke first:

"Well! I like your certainty about that depression, Prof. Can't see it noway. You're making things interesting enough, but surely that depression isn't the gospel truth. Is it?"

The Professor relaxed; he laughed, and his laugh was the most curious blend of a chuckle and a whistle, utterly impossible to describe except by reproduction. It always affected Hopkins hilariously; he said the two elements in the Professor's laugh were satisfaction and astonishment; the chuckle meant the first, the whistle the second, and the state of the Professor's mind could be well gauged from the predominance of one or the other. Just then the chuckle had the best of it.

"Mr. Hopkins," he said, "you are a very intelli-

gent man. Don't you see that a rotating and solidifying viscosity cannot become solid without forming a pitted polar extremity?"

Hopkins withstood this assault with admirable stolidity; he even looked injured.

"My dear Professor; really your statement is too simply put to appeal to the complicated convolutions of my gray matter. Your manner is juvenile. Such a subject should be treated in a becoming obscurity of terms."

After our amusement had subsided, Bjornsen explained his view. It was easily understood. The earth had cooled down from some initial gaseous or lava-like stage, and, if the congelation had not progressed far or fast enough at the poles, centrifugal force at the equator would have withdrawn enough matter to effect a depletion at one pole or the other, with the consequent result (I recall how particular the Professor was over this point) of forming a graduated, evenly rounded and smoothish concavity, if the polar areas were not too rigidly fixed; or a broken, step-like succession of terraces if they were. Later we were triumphantly reminded by the Professor of this prediction. Then too he involved his theory with demonstrations of the vertical effect of rotation, producing inverted cones or funnels in liquids, as is familiarly seen in the discharging contents of a washbasin. We were not convinced, and our evident apathy or dissidence chilled the Professor into a taciturnity from which he was scarcely aroused when cries from the water's edge of the fiord announced the return of a fishing fleet, a phalanx of *jaegts*, the single masted, square sailed, sturdy boats familiar to tourists in sea journeys along the fair Norwegian shores. It was welcomed with shouts and salutations, and the waving of flags and handkerchiefs, in which we joined.

But the hidden springs of wonderment, the latent impulse in young, strong men for adventure, discovery, perhaps some marvelous realization of the unknown, had been stirred within us. The Professor would have been gratified if he had known how restlessly Goritz and myself rolled about in our beds that night, or how with sleepless eyes, flat on our backs, we rehearsed his strange statements, or in dreams encountered polar bears, threading our way through devious leads to the wintry coasts of a NEW CONTINENT. The imagery of the north was familiar to us. We had both visited Spitzbergen and the Franz Josef Archipelago. As Hopkins had said, we had met him at Stockholm and discussed together the sensation of the hour, Bjornsen's lecture at Christiania. We were all three of us idlers—I by compulsion—but firm in body, ambitious in spirit, and half exasperated at our uselessness in the world's affairs. Goritz was a rich man, an only son, heir to the fortune of a successful fish merchant in Stockholm; I had a bare competency, and Spruce Hopkins, a vagabond American, seeing the world but yearning for sterner work, had already gained in Europe an unenviable reputation for reckless extravagance. It was at Hopkins' suggestion that we had invited the Professor to meet us at the fiord, and we were all wondering how far we might go in this strange experiment of finding Krocker Land. Should we go at all?

Whatever satisfaction the Professor might have felt over Goritz's and my own agitation, his most sanguine hopes of producing an impression would have been inflamed to exultation had he known that the Yankee had not slept a wink, had not taken off his clothes, but had just, as he characterized it, "stalled on everything," until he got his bearings on this "new stunt."

The Professor's equanimity was restored when we met him in the diningroom at breakfast the following morning, and he most good-naturedly accepted professions of contrition at our mental obduracy. But it was the American who confounded him by his sudden determination and a precipitant proposition to "*get away on the first tide.*"

"Prof.," he exclaimed clapping the smaller man on the shoulder with a cordial gaiety that shocked Goritz, "I'm willing to take the chance. It's a big stake to win, though," his whimsical smile propitiated the Professor completely. "I'm not buffaloed on all your talk about the tropical climate we're likely to meet. Of course, I've looked into the matter a little, on my own hook, and just now the plan of action is something like this. These two good friends," he waved his hands genially toward Goritz and myself, "know a good deal about zero temperatures, polar bears, walrus, starvation and ice floes; you have surveyed Spitzbergen, and as for myself— Well, honestly, I'm a tenderfoot but young, hardy, sound as a steel rail, a good shot, a prize rower, and once Prof., take it from me, I strangled a mad dog with these hands."

Hopkins never looked handsomer than at that moment, his face burning with an expectant eagerness, the color rising to his temples beneath the waves of chestnut hair, his frame and figure like an Achilles.

The Professor nodded his approval and assent.

"We'll make a strong quartette; quite enough for the jaunt. These big outfits are a blunder. I've always thought that was the mistake the English made. Plenty of dogs, rations and a few mouths go farther, with less strain and less risk. And another thing, friends," he wheeled round from the Professor, and addressed us, "no big ship, no

'Fram', no 'Roosevelt.' We'll get the stiffest and most flexible and biggest wooden naphtha launch that can be made; stock her; carry her up on a hired whaler from San Francisco, bunk at Point Barrow, pick our best chance through the leads in the open weather, and then with dogs, sleds, and kayaks, take to the main ice and scoot for the happy land of—Krocker! Eh?"

Goritz and I heard the extraordinary daredevil plan with consternation. It seemed the limit of foolishness, and absurdly ignorant. We waited for the inevitable crushing denunciation of such folly from the informed lips of the Professor. To our amazement the Professor grew radiant, seized Hopkins' hands, shaking them vigorously, his pop-eyes starting out with the most amiable encouragement, while his beaming smile endorsed Hopkins' lunacy with mad enthusiasm.

"Right, Mr. Hopkins! Right—the very thing. No reserve, no retreat, no store ship is necessary. I had convinced myself of the absolute propriety of just such a course of action, but I expected to find it a hopeless task to persuade anyone to believe me. Krocker Land will supply us with everything, and the ice course will be far more simple and easy than Nansen's trip from 86° to Franz Josef Land, or Peary's over North Greenland; a straight-away run with a few water breaks. No great hardships. At least," and the Professor in a burst of audacious nonchalance knocked over a few glasses and a water carafe in his swinging ambulations, "none greater than the ordinary experiences of an Arctic traveler. I congratulate you, Mr. Hopkins, on your perspicacity—American shrewdness. Ah! American —what you call GAMENESS. Eh? Let me assure you that had you been a hardened, experienced North Pole explorer you would never have hit on this; NEVER. You'd have stuck to the old

plans. And the only reason you are right now is that Krocker Land is an exceptional proposition, to be negotiated by exceptional methods. I promise you exceptional results."

For a few moments Goritz and I were dumb with astonishment, and I think Goritz was almost choking with indignation. Somehow he suppressed his threatening outbreak and only muttered, "I suppose we will never want to come back—never need to?"

A ripple of comic commiseration crossed Hopkins' face:

"Come now, Goritz. WHERE I COME BACK is just *here*,

> *'Sa vandra vara stora man*
> *Fran ljuset ned til skuggan.'* "

The situation was so funny, with that tantalizingly humorous face of the Professor looking on in perplexity, that Goritz burst into laughter, in which I joined, and his evanescent rage was swept away.

But the Professor answered his implied sarcasm quite literally.

"Antoine," he said, both hands raised imploringly, "trust me; we shall find food in Krocker Land, an abundance; the launch can return to Point Barrow with a small crew, and when we want it on our return—why—"

His indecision or uncertainty or the blankness of his mind about it was quickly relieved by Goritz.

"We'll send a telegram ordering it over, and *wait*—for it?"

"Oh it's no joke Goritz"—Goritz admitted *sotto voce* that it certainly was not. "We can get back without it, our kayaks will answer. And you forget the People of Krocker Land."

"Why Professor," I protested, "we haven't heard of them before."

The Professor assumed a surprised air, became portentously solemn, and then—I never felt quite certain whether he actually winked at Hopkins or not—gravely answered.

"The people of Krocker Land, Erickson, are an assured certainty. An unpeopled continent is as much a *lusus naturae* as an unfilled vacuum."

"Certainly, Erickson. Didn't you know that? Somebody must be provided to pocket the revenues from whale blubber and walrus ivory, not to mention the conservation bureau for glaciers, the output of icebergs, and the meteorological corps for the standardization of blizzards," and Hopkins hid his face in his hands to stifle his screaming mirth.

But the Professor was neither ruffled nor amused; he went on oracularly:

"Erickson, the expectation is a little discouraging. Well I'll say from your point of view it is almost impossible of belief that an unknown people exists in an unknown land near the North Pole. Now Stefansson's discovery of the so-called Blond Eskimos has nothing to do with my confidence in this matter. It rests upon a broad deduction, an *a priori* necessary assumption. If the original Eden, the primitive center of dispersion, on the basis of the unity of the human race—if—"

Behind the Professor, whose labyrinthine locution, sounding higher and higher, was attracting some general attention among the guests of the hotel, stood Hopkins with two tumblers of water in his hands. He raised them suddenly above his head and dropped them. The crash was startling, and it was followed by an equally unexpected yell of pain from Hopkins, who apparently slipped, fell, seized the tablecloth and dragged to the floor a varied array of glassware and cutlery in a clatter that was deafening.

Confusion, explanations, reparation and a tumult

of amusement followed, and in it disappeared the Professor's voluminous harangue. It was never resumed.

Hopkins recovered his seriousness, and we attacked the novel project he had suggested, critically. All that next day we argued over it, thrashing it out with the illuminative references Goritz, the Professor and myself could make to our own experiences, Hopkins listening and pertinaciously sticking to his original suggestions. His plan grew more and more attractive; its reasonableness developed more and more under examination. Of course all four of us were now thoroughly excited; the lure of discovery almost maddened us, and the necromantic charm of the Professor's amazing predictions, which we actually were unwilling to resist, instilled in us the wayward and fantastic hope that we were on the verge of a world-convulsing disclosure. We have not been disappointed.

The project finally took this shape: Hopkins and Goritz volunteered to bear all the expenses connected with the expedition; Hopkins would go to America, consult naval architects, and have a naphtha-propelled launch devised, combining, as to its hull, features of the "Fram" and "Roosevelt" in a diminutive way. Goritz would follow and buy the supplies, clothing and equipment. Then would come the Professor with instruments and books, and finally myself with three chosen men—Hopkins demanded they should be selected in America—who would be the captain, engineer and crew of the launch on its return to Point Barrow, and who would look for us the next summer. How preposterously sure we were that we would find land and game! But how ineffectually paltry after all were our expectations compared to the reality.

When everything was ready—the end of a year's

time was fixed for the date of our departure—we would have the launch set amidships on a whaler, and sail for Point Barrow, our prospective headquarters on the North American continent.

The last question Hopkins put to the Professor before we parted was about the mineral wealth of the new land, which had now incorporated its actuality with every sleeping and waking moment, seeming as certain as any other unvisited realm of Earth which we had seen on maps, but never visited.

Of course the Professor was quite equal to this demand upon his imagination.

"Mineral wealth? Probably immense. The mother lodes of the gold of Alaska have never been found. They lie north of Alaska; the geological extension of the mineral deposits of Alaska is naturally in that direction, and the enrichment of the primary crystallines with the precious metals can be reasonably asserted to surpass the mythical values of Golconda or California."

"That suits *me*," was Hopkins' laconic comment.

At last the whole scheme was pretty thoroughly worked out, down to its details. Correspondence would be maintained during the summer. The Professor left for Christiania, Goritz and myself for Stockholm, and Hopkins steamed away to Hull on the English ship "North Cape." Our conference had lasted just a week.

How wonderfully lovely was the day and scene when he left us that June morning three years ago. If portents of our success could be discerned in its delicious, enveloping glory of light and beauty, then surely we might be hopeful. The great gulls were sweeping with deep undulations through the upper sky, exulting in their splendid power, the summer wind faintly stirred the dark spruces, whose gentle expostulation at its intrusion reached

us with a sound like the washing of waves on a far-away shore. The granite rocks of peak and cliff flashed back the unchecked sunlight; the road, like a white ribbon, spun its loops to and fro over the hillside, through meads where the glistening red farm houses stood, that seemed like rubies set in an emerald shield while the waters of the fiord slumbered at our feet, a liquid mass of beryl.

It now seems to me as if a quarter of a century had passed since then. And, if events are the measure of duration to the subjective sense, it might seem even farther away. I recall Spruce Hopkins, radiant and handsome, amid a throng of new acquaintances—he gathered friends about him as frankly and quickly as roses attract bees—among whom not a few young women offered him their mute but eloquent admiration; I remember him leaning over the rail of the steamer's deck and reciting in a rollicking drawl:

"When the sea rolled its fathomless billows
Across the broad plains of Nebraska;
When around the North Pole grew bananas and willows,
And mastodons fought with the great armadillos,
For the pine-apples grown in Alaska."

(Editorial Apology. The foregoing chapter in its diction and in certain studied phases of construction will disturb the reader's sense of congruity, perhaps. He will be inclined to doubt its authenticity as the exact narrative of Alfred Erickson. The suspicion is partly creditable to his literary acumen. The editor admits substantial emendations useful for the purpose of imparting a literary atmosphere.)

CHAPTER II

Point Barrow

We were all aboard the steam whaler "Astrum" in the spring of the next year, and with us a marvel of compact maritime construction, our naphtha launch "*Pluto*." Hopkins suggested the name on the satisfactory ground that we were likely to have "a hell of a time." We had worked ourselves up to the most supreme height of confidence and enthusiasm. The Professor was in a sort of demented state of expectation; Hopkins furiously asserted the name of Christopher Columbus would now be forgotten in the new fame to be allotted to us, "the Arctic Argonauts," and finally Goritz and myself succumbed to a peculiar feeling of predestination.

Captain Coogan of the "Astrum" knew nothing of our proposed destination. It was a stipulation made by Hopkins that nothing on that point was to be discussed, until we reached Point Barrow—if we were to reach it—and the services of Captain Coogan and his selected crew—not the usual polyglot assemblage of ethnic odds and ends—were unconditionally ours up to that moment. The temptations of whaling were to be absolutely eschewed until we had vanished into the fogs and wilderness of the ice pack, beyond whose trackless waste lay Krocker Land. Of course a sea dog like Captain Coogan, a clever and hardy mate like Isaac

Stanwix, a pertinacious thinker like the engineer Bell Phillips, and such an experienced and avaricious reader as the carpenter Jack Spent (he had made ten trips to Point Barrow) could make pretty shrewd guesses as to our intentions. The stores and supplies, the sledges and kayaks, splendid vehicles of travel made under Goritz's supervision, were informing enough, had it not been for the disconcerting secrecy of the actors in this strange new ice-drama. I think we were regarded as a "parcel of wild devils or fools," though I think too, with the exception of perhaps the Professor, our physical constants were impressive.

Our departure did not escape public notice. We were besieged by reporters, but we were impenetrable, and yet we were genially communicative too. It was the Arctic or bowhead whale we were interested in; we were naturalists, the Professor was hoping to introduce the bowhead whale into European waters; just now a preliminary study of its habits, habitat, food, breeding grounds, and commercial availability was indispensable. That fiction sufficed. The remarkable launch prepared for us was made into a skillful adjunct to our investigations. We were honored by several columns of interviews in the dailies, and the splash of our adventure spread its circle of disturbance even to Washington, whence official offers of assistance and participation were received which—were never answered. Among our visitors, for we did not escape the invasion of sightseers, was that Goliah, Carlos Huerta, from whose branding iron you saved me."

(Erickson spoke this measuredly and calmly to be sure, but his hands covered his face, and I saw his body sway, convulsed by his emotion.)

"This man somehow appealed to me; perhaps it was his herculean dimensions. He was familiar

with launches and machinery, and was very intelligent; forceful, too. His suavity disarmed suspicion, and his robust, seemingly ingenuous interest pleased me. Almost his last words, before we sailed, invited me to come to see him—he handed me his card—and to tell him "all about it." It was a curious, inexplicable divination on his part that I should have much to tell. That man, Mr. Link, was the most ruthless scoundrel I ever met; he was my first scoundrel; because I had never met a scoundrel before I fell into his net.

(Again a pause. It lasted so long that I feared some complication of feeling had robbed him of his memory. I said "And Mr. Erickson, you left San Francisco?" His consciousness returned, and he turned to me smiling.)

Yes, we left San Francisco about the end of April, a dull day with fog banks lifting and falling over the Golden Gate, while a rising storm outside was turning the ocean into water alps, smiting the clouds. Our course was almost a direct line to Behring Straits; we were to pass through the channel between Unalaska and Uninak Islands, then coast the Pribylof Islands for the benefit of the Professor, reach Indian Point, on the Siberian side of the strait where some of the natives, Masinkers (*Tchouktchis*), could be seen, then cross to Port Clarence on the Alaskan shore for an inspection of the Nakooruks (*Innuits*); then two stops for the benefit of Hopkins and Goritz. We also intended to secure at the latter place dogs for our dash over the ice to the Krocker Land shore from Point Barrow. Captain Coogan recommended a stop at Cape Prince of Wales where further ethnological notes might be gathered, but this was overruled as both the Professor and Hopkins expected to visit the coal beds beyond Point Hope, and Cape Lisburne in the Arctic Ocean.

We came abreast of Pribylof about May sixth, stalled off St. Paul's Island in a still sea, light southwest winds and rising tide. The Professor was pulled off to the island in the morning; his eagerness to visit these famous fur-seal rookeries being irrepressible. He had talked of little else, in the intervals when we were not discussing our momentous enterprise, but the marvelous stories which old navigators, Captain Scammon and Captain Bryant had told, and the fascinating studies of Elliot. He told us that formerly, in the middle of the nineteenth century and later, these pelagic mammals had swarmed in millions up to these islands, rising from the ocean like a veritable mammal inundation. He told us about the bull seals, how they fought, their tenacity, their endurance, how a bull will fight fifty or sixty battles for the possession of his ample harem of twelve or fifteen cows, and last out to the end of the season, three months perhaps without food, living on his own fat, covered with scars, eyes gouged out, striped with blood; and how the jovial bachelors, not so disconsolate as might be imagined, the "hollus-chickies," congregate to one side. He said the noise from these monstrous breeding grounds, where thousands of seals are roaring, bleating, calling—mothers, fathers and pups—could be heard, with the wind right, five or six miles to sea. He didn't expect to see the households developed then—it was too early—but he might have an opportunity to find a few advance bulls on their stations. He found the bulls, and he found an adventure, and *we found him.*

It was almost four or five hours after the Professor had left the ship in a yawl rowed by two sailors, that Hopkins, Goritz, and myself followed him in another boat. We saw the yawl on a short beach of sand, with the men sunning themselves

and asleep on the black rocks which hemmed in the little cove. We ran our boat on the sands, the men came strolling toward us, rubbing their eyes and recovering from the inertia of what had been an uninterrupted snooze. When we asked for the Professor they told us he had disappeared, and had ordered them to stay where they were while he pursued his investigations. He certainly was nowhere in sight and a little anxious over his long absence we moved up to the broken rim of rocks which probably separated this retreat from some similar beach on either side.

The elevated cones and ridges of the island could be seen towering up toward the interior in gaunt gray surfaces, on which rested extensive patches of snow. We surmounted the inconsiderable elevation and found it was a broader barrier than we had anticipated, a platform of jagged projecting crests with intervening rocky basins or tables, the whole an extended spur from a black wall of rock, on whose summit were the clustering huts of a native village. On the edges of the rocks hung a few large cakes of ice, and the receding tide had left broken, hummocky masses tilted at various angles over the inclined faces of stone. The scene was chilly and desolate and to add to its lugubrious desolation a fog had slowly drifted in from the sea and was now tortuously rolling down from the highland on the opposite shore to the island. Our search for the missing Professor would have to be hastened.

"The Professor must be found," said Hopkins. "We shan't know how to deal with the native Krockerans when we meet 'em, without the Professor. At present he is the only man alive who understands their peculiarities, and as an interpreter he's bound to prove useful."

"Of course," said Goritz, "you don't think the seals can eat him?"

"They might," answered Hopkins, "but they could never digest him. It would certainly be a death potion to the venturesome bull who mistook him for food. Likely as not he is now engaged in explaining to an interesting family his plans for the preservation and increase of them and their kindred."

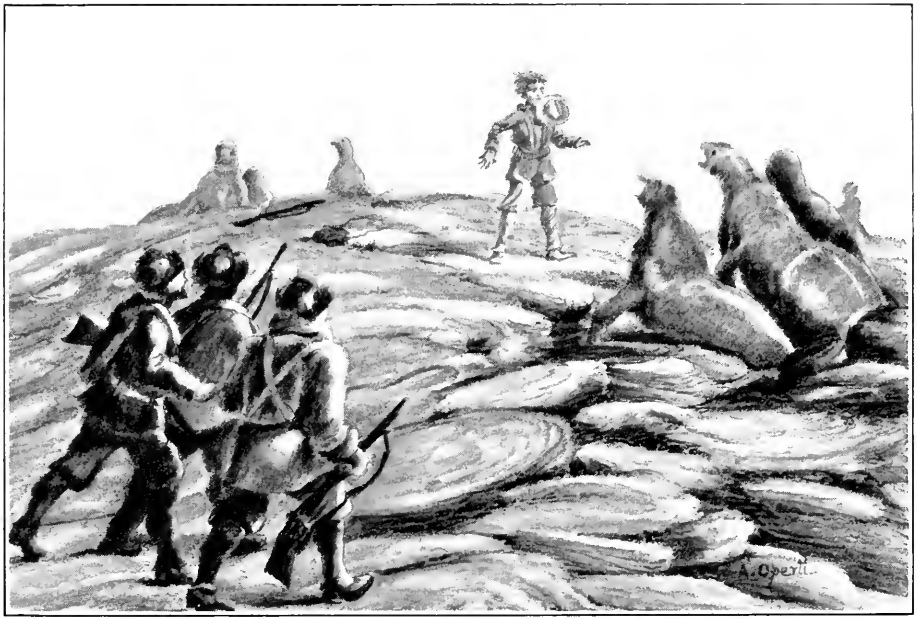
During this irrelevant badinage I had crossed the rocky flat and reached another cove or gully, headed towards the land by a slope of broken boulders, and floored with sand. We had as yet encountered no seals. Looking beyond this bay I saw on a promontory bounding the distant edge of the beach what seemed like a human figure, or indeed like a group of figures. Watching the objects for a short time I could more clearly distinguish them, and to my astonishment determined that one was a man and the rest some erect animal forms, doubtless seals. The group was at an extreme point on the rocks, and, if the solitary human was the Professor, his only possible retreat from the beleaguering seals would be the water.

I hallooed to my companions, pointing to the distant objects, and hastened forward onto the rock-strewn beach. Goritz and Hopkins struggled over the rough patch of rocks and overtook me.

"Yes, by the lives of all the saints!" cried Hopkins, who had stopped a moment and with shaded eyes was studying the enigmatical figures silhouetted against sea and sky. "It's the Professor and three *beachmasters* apparently bent on his capture, or else drinking in wisdom from his lips. It might just be they're competing for his services in teaching their prospective families."

"I can see him waving his hands, it seems to me, and now he's shooing them with his hat," exclaimed Goritz. "He's in something of a fix. Hurry."

We bounded forward, and over the beaten sand



THE PROFESSOR AND THE PRIBYLOF SEALS

raced together, taking quick glances ahead at the now certain embarrassment of our friend. It was indeed the Professor, and his predicament was unmistakable. Amusement however mingled with our anxiety, for as we drew near we could plainly make out that he had taken his hat between his teeth and was violently wagging his head, the absurd appendage of his cap flying up and down producing a very ludicrous effect. It was a serviceable device, however, for the amazed seals had stopped their approaches; their barking or snarling, at first quite audible, had ceased, and they were now attentively regarding the Professor with almost immobile heads.

"Guess," called out Hopkins between breaths, "they think the Professor is a little dippy, and are reconsidering his engagement as a domestic instructor."

We were now near enough to attract the Professor's sight; he hailed us with swinging arms but did not venture to desist from his mandarin-like wigwagging. The approach to his position was a little difficult, and we suffered some falls. Our advent had attracted the notice of the bulls and they swerved about to receive us, humping their backs, leaping forward on their flippers, and renewing their truculent miauling or barking. We attacked them with stones but their defiance was unchanged, and they lunged and rushed, quite unappalled by our onset. They would retreat almost immediately to their former positions, holding the poor Professor in chancery with an apparent unanimity that kept Goritz laughing, for with every retreat, the Professor would renew his violent gesticulations.

At length Goritz and Hopkins armed with an armful of stones drove in on the biggest of the bulls, and assailed him with such a shower of missiles that his reserve was overcome, and he plunged forward,

following them for twenty feet or more. I ran to the Professor and caught his arm, and we got out of the zone of danger, while the momentarily allied *beachmasters*, frustrated from their imprisonment of him, suddenly resented each other's proximity and after a miscellaneous "mix-up," as Hopkins called it, shuffled and loped away to their former stations, the chosen spots for their future *seraglios*.

With the liberated Professor we sat down on some stool-like fragments inserted in the sand of the beach and heard his story. It was laughable enough and added an unusual trait to the recorded conduct of the big bull seals, usually indifferent to the approach of men. These three indolent, unoccupied forerunners of the great herds that might soon be expected, had actually chased the Professor and, having cornered him on the promontory, had hopelessly besieged him. The Professor had been too much interested or too imprudent. His amiability perhaps had brought him into this unexpected dilemma, for he had gathered up seaweed from the rocks at the edge of the water, and attempted to feed the bulls. They followed him, and their disappointed expectations developed later into the pugnacity that had made him a prisoner.

While he was talking a few more seals emerged from the ocean, lazily hauling themselves on the rocks with that ill-assured clumsiness of motion so strikingly replaced in the water by the greatest grace, agility and speed.

"But Professor," interrupted Goritz, "what were you doing with your hat?"

The Professor, who had been much ruffled and excited over his encounter, welcomed this inquiry with a restored equanimity.

"Ah! Goritz, that is a contribution to science. On our return I shall call the attention of Lloyd

Morgan and other animal psychologists to this novel observation. Antoine, it has long been known that the rhythmical oscillation of a flexible substance, a rag, hat, towel, banner, exercises a peculiar influence on animals. It will allay the ferocity of a mad dog or alarm him. Color has something to do with it, as instance the red rag which irritates the bull. Now—" here the Professor looked critically at his steamer cap, and may have mentally noted that it was a green and brown Scotch plaid. "Now this influence seems curiously reinforced if the substance or garment is taken in the mouth and shaken."

The incorrigible Hopkins had again buried his face in his cupped palms.

"No reason that is incontrovertible has been assigned for this, but I assume that it is an appeal to a latent *demonism* in animals, which in its later evolution appears as *devil-worship* in aboriginal people. I most fortunately recalled this, and at a critical moment, when I was threatened with the necessity of retreating into the sea—" The poorly repressed vibrations in Hopkins' body might have been referred to sympathy or—something else. "A quite unnecessary ablution, let us say," and the Professor smiled benignantly at me, as perhaps the one most gravely interested in his narrative. "I thought of this remarkable device, which I believe has something of the nature of an incantation. The effect was miraculous. This simple gesture held the seals at bay; I think it is quite demonstrable also that there is a physiological basis for their evident stupifaction—the optic nerve. These animals you know have very poor sight—the optic nerve is disturbed and a cerebral vertigo is induced which, like—"

"That settles it," cried Hopkins, stumbling to his feet with a very red face and hurrying across the

sands. "Professor, there's something worse than seals on this island; there are the U. S. officials, and—I guess they are charmproof."

"Exactly," assented the Professor in an absent-minded way, "exactly, but had you gentlemen restrained yourselves a little, I believe I could have advanced an interesting corroboration to a hitherto dimly—"

A gun shot was heard. It evidently came from our men in the adjoining cove and we smothered the Professor's scientific homily with a shout, and accelerated our departure.

When we reached the boat we found some natives and two resident officials surrounding our men, the former somewhat excited and demonstrative. The officials questioned us and were informed of our purely accidental visit, and with that explanation, as the fog had increased and there were threatening symptoms of a blow, we manned our boats and got away.

Captain Coogan resumed our course, making northwest for Indian Point, amid heavy ice, whose leads were carefully followed until they liberated us in open water, and the immediate danger of being nipped was past. The next morning I was awakened—my room adjoined Hopkins'—by hearing the American reciting in a voice loud enough to justify forcible remonstrance:

"I met my mates in the morning (and Oh, but I am old),
Where roaring on the ledges the summer groundswell rolled,
I heard them lift the chorus that dropped the breakers' song,
The beaches of Lucannon—two million voices strong,
The song of pleasant stations beside the salt lagoons,

The song of blowing squadrons that shuffled down the dunes
The song of midnight dances that charmed the sea to flame
The beaches of Lucannon—before the sealers came!"

We made Indian Point, or Chaplin, as the settlement is called, in five days, held back by floes and fogs, narrowly escaping a collision with an adventuresome and premature whaler making its way to the same destination. These sailors often get caught in the ice, when they are helpless, and if the pack tightens on them, they are likely to come to grief with a cut stem or a stoved side. We assisted one poor fellow out of such a plight. His vessel was shipping water fast, and we helped shift his load, giving the boat a stern list that lifted its broken nose and allowed him to make repairs.

Chaplin is a small settlement of natives on the Siberian coast, the largest along the line to Behring Straits. There may be some forty huts there, and the whale men find it a convenient place to do a stroke of trade. Indeed, if it were not for their visits the unfortunate Masinkers might resign the job of trying to live at all, as the whales are more scarce than formerly, or more cautious, and walrus and seal scarcely turn in closer than St. Lawrence Island. The village is on a projecting tooth of land—a mere sandpit—and back from the village along the foothills is the curious, disconsolate looking graveyard where the dead are buried in rudely excavated holes and covered with stones and earth, some with deer antlers stuck about as gravestones.

The natives were not slow in coming aboard, and as we had outrun the whalers who are annually expected, their reception of us was, so to speak, enthusiastically hearty. I thought it was a trifle overdone. The entire population tried to get

aboard, and assumed possession of everything with such unsophisticated satisfaction that it strained the limits of our hospitality and tired our patience somewhat. They were a jocular, spontaneous and chattering crowd, of all ages, many hues, and some diversity of dress. Each canoe had received from Captain Coogan a bucket of bread, but their appetite for tobacco would have made a tremendous contribution to the income of the United Cigar Company. Everyone wanted it—men, women and children, and it stood first in the commercial schedule of trade. We rejected their whalebone ivory and foxskins, but boots, skin shirts and coats were acceptable.

Our very generous demeanor towards their needs elicited the stormiest approval, but we regretfully learned that it prolonged their occupation of the ship which, so far as fragrance was considered, had seriously declined from its former estate of habitability. Articles of all sorts come handy to these people, but as we were not prepared for their omnivorous demands, tobacco formed the staple of our barter.

Now in our little library, whose usefulness the sustained succession of long days of suspense or idleness had fully demonstrated, we had read in a small light blue book by Herbert L. Aldrich, called "Arctic Alaska and Siberia," of the author's visit to this very place. In the book a man, Gohara by name, was designated as "*the Masinker of the Masinkers*," a man forty years of age, tall, commanding, and "by far the best specimen mentally and physically of his people."

We discovered him. He was yet vigorous, though approaching seventy and his remarkable spouse—his third wife then—*Siwurka*, maintained a supreme position in his household, which the advent, since Aldrich's visit, of two younger women

had not disturbed. One of these later accessions to Gohara's domestic felicity was a person of becoming rotundity, with a distracting tousle of hair that almost covered her eyes. The inexpugnable scientific curiosity of the Professor led him into his second predicament with this young person, which, for a moment, promised to be more serious than his inquisitional visit to the fur seals.

It was the last day of our stay at Indian Point which had been prolonged by the viewless stretches of ice moving out of the Arctic into Behring Sea, and we were all ashore. As usual the Professor deserted us, following out some preconcerted scheme of observation or experiment in which our participation was unnecessary or even resented. It was some hours after we had missed him, and our inspection of the *tupicks*, the dogs, the children, and the industrial products of the Masinkers was completed, that a large boy, prodigiously magnified by his big boots, rushed upon our trailing group crying:

"Doghter! Doghter! He out of head. Hoopla!"

The fellow was excited and out of breath with running, and his excitement became reflected in the faces of the natives around us, who were helplessly bewildered and looked so.

"It's the Professor—another row. Hold back the crowd. I'll go with this screaming lunatic and extricate our distinguished friend. Some scientific escapade, you can bet your hat on it," whispered Hopkins.

To inquiries of his acquaintances the boy kept up an unintelligible jabber and pointed to the farther side of the village. Apparently the assemblage were on the point of bolting for the spot, in deference to the boy's ejaculations. Hopkins handed us a package which he had been reserving for some sort of a valedictory to Chaplin and its unsavory popu-

lation. It was a liberal assortment of quids, smoking tobacco, cigars and snuff, and its exhibition and immediate distribution quelled the flight of the rabble around us, whose inclination to stay where they were instantly hardened like adamant.

Hopkins seized the boy, turned him around, and the two vanished in the direction the boy had indicated. In about half an hour, or less, they returned with the Professor between them, much upset but calm, and apparently indifferent to the objurgations and imprecations, delivered in unvarnished and vigorous *Tchoukchi*, hurled at him by no less a man than Gohara, followed by his five wives, whose voices querulously mingled and reinforced their master's denunciations. The situation was unquestionably very amusing, very curious, and, except for the fortunate intervention of Hopkins' miscellaneous propitiations, might have become very annoying. We hurried the Professor to the beach, got into our boats, Hopkins making a sternwise address to the multitude on the shore, a most grotesque and tumultuous bunch of long, short, thin, fat, smiling, frowning, dark and light figures in skins and fur, and reached the "Astrum," which that very evening left the offing, and, over a clear, moon-lit sea was directed toward Port Clarence in Alaska. A hard blow was on, and the ice packs had been scattered or driven eastward.

Hopkins' story that night, after the Professor had retired, which he did unusually early and with a complete resumption of his smile and his good humor, entertained us until after midnight. I abbreviate its windings and prolixity, interspersed with Hopkins' incommunicable reflexions.

The boy, conveniently named Oolah, led Hopkins some way back of the settlement to a *tupick* of considerable size, and covered with canvas (usually walrus hide or skins form these roofings) which was,

it so happened, Gohara's storehouse, stocked with trading material. Hopkins restrained his guide's impatience, and finding a convenient aperture for the inspection of the interior peered within. To his delighted astonishment there was the Professor, with notebook and pencil, and near him in placid wonderment, which occasionally broke in smiles or deepened into terror, was the last and, with reservations for taste, most attractive wife of the head trader of Indian Point, *Ting-wah* by name. The Professor's performances were immoderately extravagant. Seen in their incongruous environment, combined with their novelty, they compelled Hopkins to retire at intervals and roll on the ground, in order to control the violence of his merriment, another proceeding which strengthened Oolah's conviction in the immanence of the devil among these strangers.

When Hopkins first descried the Professor, he was standing erect with his arms raised high above his head, close together, the hands in contact, flapping and clapping them in an indescribably funny way, while at intervals he shrank and cowered over as if seized with the insupportable pains of colic. To these antics the woman returned a perplexed stare, as the Professor resumed his normal manner, took up his pad and pencil, and waited apparently for her response, while she, equally expectant, stood stock still and waited for more explicit communications.

Then the Professor suddenly extended his arms in front of him, and wheeled round on his heels, with such commendable agility, that as he spun, his expansive ears seemed almost obliterated. It was then that Hopkins resorted to the refuge of the ground to conceal his feelings. Still the woman was mute, but her face showed a rising fear, and

her hands rose to her neck as if to seize something from the skin pouch made in her upper garment.

The Professor left off his physical maneuvers and began a series of grimaces which, as Hopkins expressed it, "would have dimmed the luster of the best vaudeville star he had ever seen." They expressed almost everything, beginning with something that might be called suffering, to a terrible excruciation of joy, when the Professor exerted his features to a degree that Hopkins called "the limit of facial agony." And yet the girl was silent, but her eyes never left the Professor, and Hopkins, and Oolah too, saw her quietly draw a knife from her "bread basket." Hopkins might not have observed this if Oolah had not grunted, "*Stick 'im.*"

He felt then it was time to intervene, but his interest and curiosity—"better'n a show" he repeated over and over again—had up to this point prevented him.

Suddenly the Professor desisted from his rapid play of expression, and began to moan diabolically, rolling towards the woman with supplicating arms. The knife flashed, it was upraised, and the girl crouched, her face darkening with either rage or terror. The next moment she had sprung at the now observant and terror-stricken Professor, who executed a flank movement—"side-stepped" Hopkins put it—and was out of the door and—into the protecting embrace of Hopkins' arms, while Oolah with precocious intelligence intercepted Ting-wah. The girl's pent-up emotions spent themselves in screams and fervent but barbarous complaints that brought Gohara and his other spouses to her rescue. Hopkins, utterly mystified by the Professor's exhibition, resorted to the very plausible explanation, suggested by Oolah in the first place, that the Professor had gone crazy, which indeed he most apostolically believed himself. This answered the

purpose, though it did not repress Gohara and his family from uttering a string of uncomplimentary epithets which might have provoked a serious disturbance had it not been for Hopkins' tact and the celerity of our retreat. Gohara's rage followed our boat with stridulous recriminations.

The Professor was noticeably crestfallen and almost sullenly indifferent to our questions as to what had happened. It was only a few days later, when his spirits had become thoroughly restored, that he spoke about it, with a sudden assumption of confidence that delighted us.

"My friends," the Professor began one cold, radiant afternoon as we were ranged round the naphtha launch admiring its adaptation, strength, the happy conception of structural ice runners let into her keel, the easily unshipped tiller and screw; "My friends, the theories of the origin of language have been various; there are the views of Geiger as to its inception in movement and action, those of Noire as to the importance of sound, onomatopoetic or imitative, and the value of expression, as with Darwin."

"You see," he continued with a fine indirection of reference, which we appreciated, "I was before an untutored child of nature. I attempted, along these various lines of non-verbal intercourse to secure an illuminative response that might throw some light upon theory. Under the circumstances, the subject, vitiated I think by contact with European culture—Ah—"

"*Shied*," suggested Hopkins.

"Well," the Professor smilingly concluded, "there was certainly an *hiatus*. Her aboriginal powers of interpretation were dulled—dulled—perhaps extinguished."

"But Professor, you woke up a good deal of oratory. In fact, Professor, you're nervy and—if

I may be permitted the vulgarity of quotation—

'You would joke with hyenas, returning
their stare
With an impudent wag of your head,
And you went to walk, paw-in-paw, with
a bear,
"Just to keep up its spirits," you said.
Without rest or pause—while those
frumious jaws
Went savagely snapping around—
You skipped and you hopped and you
floundered and flopped
Till fainting you fell to the ground.'"

The Professor passed his hand approvingly over the side of the launch, ignoring the jibe. We dropped the subject, indeed forgot it, listening to Goritz's animated and assuring praise of the little craft that would introduce us to a new continent, and the incident was never again heard of.

Our next haven was Port Clarence in Alaska, and we had a lot of trouble making it. The ice streaming out of Behring Straits was thick, and, as the Yankee put it, "*numerous*." The captain and mates were keen to watch their chances, and we often found ourselves surrounded by blocks that the wind threatened to pack together to our imminent peril. It was very early, and whereas the whalers make Port Clarence about midsummer we expected or hoped to get to Point Barrow about that time. A northwest wind came up and scattered the ice and gave us an open sea, though we were compelled to make some long detours around white meadows of snow-covered ice, that slipped off into the recesses of low, cold fogs and suggested illimitable barriers ahead of us.

The distant rattling or caking sound of grinding ice was sometimes constantly heard for hours, and again vast fields, looking almost motionless, loomed

up with the sun shimmering their surfaces into an endless complexity of mirrors. Along the indented or hummocky edges of these little continents we would steam serenely and exult courageously in the thought of crossing just such white ways to the hidden wonders of a hidden world. We often fell into fits of dreaming, buoyed up by the calm and glowing vaticinations of the Professor.

We finally brought up at the port and received a tumultuous reception, having outrun the whaling fleet. The natives, *Nakooruks*, crowded aboard, and were intently watched but quite passively shunned by the Professor. Water and wood were taken on here, and about one hundred selected dogs, whose points were minutely inspected or determined by Goritz and myself. It was June, and already flowers spun their colored webs over the inhospitable shores, compensating for their brief life here in the north by a marvelous abundance. Yellow, white and blue, the bewitching patches of moss-blue flowering hepatica, forget-me-not, anemone, phlox and daisy charmed us, and for a moment brought back such a flood of memories that a surge of homesickness swept over us, the last tug of the pleasant world we had turned our backs on before the portals of a stranger world opened and closed on us, perhaps forever.

We bought fish and furs from the natives who had traveled hither with their pelts and offerings from Norton Sound, Cape Prince of Wales, and King's Island. There was confusion and bustle on shore, and on board the barking of dogs, guttural controversies among the Eskimos, wailing of babies, orders, the shriek of the donkey engine hauling on cargo, produced a pleasant excitement which attained its climax on the arrival of the United States revenue cutter. Visiting of the captains, exchange of news followed, and we were told that

the season was unprecedented; the ice in the Arctic had broken up early, there was a clear passage in the straits and an audacious whaler had attempted the passage and "skinned" through to Point Hope. We were sanguine of reaching Point Barrow early in July.

On the fourth of July we were under Cape Lisburne, encountering the rush of the wind that seems harbored by that lofty cliff, and which like a physical avalanche pushed us over until the water rippled over the lee rail. Along the shores everywhere there was a broad avenue of open water, stretching from the skirt of shore ice to the heavy packs, sheeted with fogs and murmurously moaning, illimitably flooring that mysterious ocean whose furthest waters beat on the shores of Krocker Land.

From Cape Lisburne the shore line strikes at a right angle to the Corwin coal fields, the low shores, except for a few occasional interruptions, as with Cape Lisburne itself, marking the margins of the higher uplands in the interior. Salt lagoons, crescent shaped beaches, sandpits, shoal basins, furnish a monotonous succession of flattened, uninteresting features, which practically reaches to Point Barrow. At the Corwin coal beds slate, sandstone and conglomerate overlie each other, and the Mesozoic age of the beds themselves is established. Here the Professor emerged from the mental coma which had suspended his pedagogic enthusiasms since we left Indian Point, and a few fern leaf fossils unlocked again the storehouse of his learning and loosened his tongue with eloquent predictions.

Standing up at our mess table with a beautifully preserved fern leaf, sketched in black interlacings, reticulations and frondy leaflets on an ashen-colored slate, the Professor spoke to us, and indeed we ourselves felt the thrill of a reconstructed world in this

bleak land, as we saw this silent token of former warmth.

"My friends," he held up the fossil leaf, "here is a vestige of the past, a leaf of a fern. It tells us of hot, moist, heat-oppressed cycles of years, when marshes densely thicketed with tree fern, swollen with hot rains, drenched in a perspiration of mists, covered these now arid snow-blanketed flats; when a reptilian life, the consonant faunal response to these climatic conditions flourished here also, when, dropping into the bayous and ponds, leaf upon leaf, branches, spores and trunks of an expanded filicine flora built up the masses of vegetable debris in later ages, to become consolidated and transformed into coal and—" the Professor's eyes started, his inherent smile became a portentous stare, and the wide ears seemed almost to converge to catch his own words of promise; "and—*we shall rediscover a warm or temperate climate here at the North Pole. WHY?*"

His voice spoke this interrogation in something like a squeal, so that the answer, in its unaffected profundity, produced a really dramatic climax.

"*Because we shall be nearer the center of the earth.*"

We took on coal at the Corwin mines and resumed our progress northward in the still unimpeded lane of open water, with porridge ice forming fast along the outer pack but the shore rim intact, and bucking against a strong northeast current setting along shore. We passed Point Lay and Icy Cape the second day, and reached Point Barrow on the tenth of July.

How well I recall our landing on the low beach of this tip-top point of the continent, and wondering, in a dreary dream of coming hardships and dangers, at its desolation, a low barren sandbank forty to one hundred yards across. At Cape Smythe a small promontory raises a faint remonstrance

against the encroachments of the sea in a bluff of about thirty feet elevation, and here we found the village of Uglaamie, a cluster of twenty or more huts, inhabited by a boreal tribe, the *Nuwukmeun*. Life however, in the plants and animals revived our feelings, and the Professor's exultation over the traces of old beach lines inspirited us. Here on the land, in propitious spots, sprang up buttercups, dandelions and a peculiar poppy; over our heads flew flocks of eider ducks, a butterfly danced gayly in its wavering flight by our side, and Captain Coogan reported a school of whale running to the northeast, "*in a hurry.*"

We found some standing portions of the United States meteorological station placed here in 1902, and Goritz stumbled upon a dismantled graveyard where saint and sinner, rich and poor had promiscuously suffered from the inroads of the Eskimo dog. It offered a mournful commentary upon the transitoriness of human greatness.

But reflections were out of place; we had reached the point of departure, and the Great Unknown sternly invited us to begin our quest. Under such circumstances the long subdued instincts of the primal man reassert themselves, and an augury of good fortune befell us that was droll enough, unrelieved by the nervous solemnity of our feelings, but which so connected itself with these as to give it an absurd stateliness of meaning.

An angora goat was the queer and unexpected waif we found here, left by an unlucky whaler the previous year; a long haired, pugnacious billy goat, whose property or power as a mascot had failed to save the "Siren" from being "nipped, pooped and swamped," and lost in the remorseless ice. The resident Eskimos in Uglaamie had imbibed respect for the goat (which had been somewhat summarily abandoned by its former devotees) and its influence

with the unseen agencies that control destiny. But they were logical enough to conclude that its intimacy was with bad—*tuna*—rather than with good spirits. This omnivorous beast furnished us with a favorable omen, all the more auspicious because he embodied the very genius of destruction.

Now this expatriated goat rejected the prostrations and worship of the Nuwukmeun, like a capricious deity, and perversely clung to us with embarrassing insistence. The launch had been put in the water; it seemed almost ideal in its qualities, it shot through the water, it turned at a suggestion; its mobility, its steadiness, its comfortable size, its ample deck room, the large capacity of its storage tanks, its strength and sinewy stiffness delighted us. With this, and with propitious chances, we could follow leads, narrow and crooked, mount the ice, and make of it a giant sled, to resume at an instant's notice its natural home and so circumvent all treacheries of ice or water, with protean ease sailing on each.

Lost in his admiration of his creation, as it rose and rocked in a low swell at the side of the whaler, Goritz stood on the shore and forgot his priceless chronometer which, wrapped in a red flannel rag, he had for a moment placed on the sand. The rest of us were not far from him, but might have failed to detect the imminent danger, when suddenly the Professor clapping his hands together in vigorous whacks, shouted,

"Antoine! Antoine! The goat, the goat; the chronom—"

The sentence remained incomplete. Like a flash Goritz had wheeled about, to see his hircine holiness, with insufferable assurance, pick up in his tremulous lips the precious watch. If Goritz turned like lightning, his attack on the offender was even a trifle quicker. He caught the beast by the

throat, determined to intercept the descent of the timekeeper into the intricate passages of the god's intestines. There was a struggle, the goat falling over on its back and kicking with might and main, while Goritz inexorably tightened his constricting grip on the animal's wind-pipe. There could be but one of two results—a dead goat or the recovered chronometer, and, of course, it was the latter.

The choking mascot, with an expiring effort, gagged, and shot the uninjured instrument, still swathed in its red envelope, from his mouth. The fallen god's subjects were at hand also, a little bewildered over their deity's predicament. When the reparation, on the part of the goat, was made, Goritz released him, kicked him, and the humiliated tuna turned tail and incontinently bolted for the nearest igloo, and—tell it not in Gath—the affair was construed as a "*good sign.*"

It was the eve of the day appointed for our northward advance. Captain Coogan invited the officers of another recently arrived whaler aboard, and spread a generous banquet for us, which involved the last resources of his larder and pantry, and really seemed sumptuous. I think we all felt a little overawed, or indeed a good deal so, by the tremendous exploit we were embarking on. That night the midnight sun shone strangely along the horizon upon the waste of northern ice, illimitable, roseate, inscrutable, the white cerement of a dead continent, and that dead continent the one we hoped to reach alive! Would we?

There were speeches, toasts, stories, impromptu songs (Goritz played well on a mandolin and sang some courage-inspiring ballads of Scandinavia, and Hopkins could "warble" as he called it, quite pleasingly) and we were wished "good luck" a thousand times. Still we felt the restraint of an overhanging mysterious fate, and all that Coogan

or Isaac Stanwix, or Bell Phillips, or Jack Spent, or the newly arrived friends from Alaska, could contrive to express of cheer and encouragement—and the verbal part of the contrivance was rather limited and monotonous—failed to dispel our solemnity or the inner sense of serious misgiving. We laughed indeed when Hopkins told the story of the goat, the chronometer and the goat's abrupt contrition under Goritz's forcible persuasion. Hopkins concluded that it reminded him of an incident "at home" narrated as follows in verse:

"There was a man named Joseph Cable
Who bought a goat just for his stable,
One day the goat, prone to dine,
Ate a red shirt right off the line.

"Then Cable to the goat did say:
'Your time has come; you'll die this day'
And took him to the railroad track,
And bound him there upon his back.

"The train then came; the whistle blew,
And the goat knew well his time was due;
But with a mighty shriek of pain
Coughed up the shirt and flagged the train."

When all was over, and everyone had gone to bed or bunk, and dreams, I stole out alone on the deck of the "Astrum" and "thought it over." The Arctic silence weighed upon me like an ominous portent; the dusky sun rolling its flaming orb along the western horizon (it was two o'clock past midnight) sent shafts of bronzy light over the rubbled ice fields that returned a twilight glow, and along the horizon on either side of the sun, low down, burned a spectral conflagration. It was clear, the wind blew, and chafing sounds, that may have been roars from where they emanated, but came to me as

hoarse whispers, rose northward, as if spirits spoke.

I remembered how Ootah, the Eskimo, explained Peary's success in reaching the pole; he said "*the devil is asleep or having trouble with his wife, or we should never have come back so easily.*" I devoutly prayed that domestic turmoil in the household of his satanic majesty might again prove distracting.

But to penetrate that vast icy solidity with a naphtha launch! It seemed like trying to break one's way through a glacier with an ice pick. I recalled the fable of the Pied Piper when at the "mighty top" of Koppelberg Hill:

> "A wondrous portal opened wide
> As if a cavern were suddenly hollowed,"

and I remembered too, to a more practical purpose, that Amundsen navigated the tiny "*Gjea,*" a sailing sloop with a gasoline engine, from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

CHAPTER III

On The Ice Pack

Our task was before us and it was to be entered upon at once. Perhaps you are thinking that we were hopelessly amateurish, inconsiderate, improvident and foolish. BUT WE SUCCEEDED. Nor were we forgetful or ignorant. Everything had been read. The elaborate preparations for polar exploration in the great expeditions had been studied. Two of us had been in the north before. The apparent simplicity of our outfit arose from a peculiar circumstance, and that was an imbedded conviction, perhaps only in me shaken by recurrent fits of alarm, that Krocker Land was a reality, and that it was habitable. And that meant life and living.

Then too we had fallen under a spell of imagination, we had become hopelessly enthralled in the visions of a new order of things. It was as if we had drunk draughts of some Medean drug that had stolen away our common sense and immersed us in a flood of fantasies. I don't think we confessed anything concretely to one another; we talked together about Krocker Land just as men might talk about some portion of the earth that they had never seen, but which as a geographical certainty was on the maps and was known to possess an unusual interest. Perhaps, after all, the Professor was responsible for the orientation of thought that made us clairvoyant and credulous.

Still our plans had been fixed with a dry precision, as those of other explorers had been, and our supplies comprised just the things that stock the most prosaic and methodically arranged scientific expeditions. We had our tins of pemmican, of biscuit, of sugar, of coffee, condensed milk, our oil and our oil stoves. We were each provided with a rifle, a shotgun and ammunition. There were matches, hatchets, can openers, salt, needles and thread, bandages, quinine, astringents, liniments, sledges and kayaks, dogs and harness, tents, furs, alcohol, rugs, snowshoes, pickaxes, saw-knives, *kamiks*, certainly more things than Nansen and Johannsen had had when they left the "Fram" and scooted for the pole over the paleocrystic sea; and we were not looking for the pole, we were engaged in a trip to a continent, most certainly impingeable, because it stretched over 90 or 100 degrees of longitude, and 20 or 30 degrees of latitude.

And then—Ah, here our minds, *irised*, so to speak, like cracked crystals, furnished us a journey into fairy land—once there, we were to be entertained by wonders and comforts, then more wonders and comforts! Had we ever said that to each other consciously in our waking moments, we would have forlornly concluded that *piblokto*, the Eskimo hysteria, had carried us into the seventh heaven of affectation and madness. No; it was not fairy land indeed, but something more marvelous, a miracle of realities that to recall even now makes my head spin with the vertigo of a confessed self-delusion. LISTEN!

We had staked everything on the naphtha launch. As an invention it was ideal. We expected to drive it over the ice floes, and to sail it across the leads. It would hold all we needed, and our team of dogs, forty or fifty in number, would be able to pull it over the ice. If it was too heavy in

the snows it could be lightened of its load on the sledges, or on the sledge teams which we expected would accompany it. The project appeared a little cumbersome but safe. We had noticed the striking absence from the western polar sea of icebergs, and we concluded that the sea north of Point Barrow, like the sea generally north of Cape Columbia or Cape Sheridan was a frozen water, smooth or interrupted only by the pressure ridges which scarred its surface with cyclopean walls of massed ice. We had indeed gone further in our inferences, and assumed that no mountainous elevations, with their chasms, intervening valleys and gorges made up the coasts of Krocker Land, for if they had, as in Greenland or Grant Land or as usually in the eastern archipelago, the discharge of the ice streams that filled them would have produced icebergs. Or was the annual snowfall inadequate?

Certainly the spectacular processions of the icebergs every spring and summer in the east were absent in the west. The conditions presented seemed to be a convincing assurance that our naphtha launch and ice boat, in its composite adaptation to land or water, would successfully traverse the flat ice sheet. Not indeed that it would actually be a plane table, but the obstacles of hummocks, piled up ice floes, ridges, mounds and walls could be circumvented, avoided, and the launch bodily driven over the pack. Such maneuvers might add much to the distance, but the resources were sufficient for a long journey, and, were we made to feel that the launch offered insurmountable difficulties, we would abandon it, increase the loads of our sledges with its distributed freight, and go on.

The naphtha launch was a simple and interesting vessel. It was a long, narrow, strong wooden raft with curving sides, and a broad, smooth sloping

bow, reinforced by steel binders, bolts and rivets, set on runners, with a short tiller, easily unshipped, and a peculiar slanting propeller which was simply one rotating blade of alternating plates of wood and steel, allowing a shifting attachment to the engine, so that its stem could be shortened or lengthened, or withdrawn altogether, and the propeller disk sheathed in a pocket in the body of the vessel.

The upper works were a watertight box and nothing more, about six feet in height, made up of two skins, between which was packed asbestos, built strongly, with no doors or windows. A few covered eyelets allowed a poor sort of ventilation which could be improved by opening the manhole on top, through which entrance to the inside was to be made. Through this manhole everything we carried was introduced; the sledges and kayaks were placed on its roof. This box-cabin covered three-fourths of the length of the boat. The bow admitted the socket and step for a mast and a small sail. It had no beauty, no speed, but we believed it was adaptable to the vicissitudes of travel before us, because of its amphibious properties. If fairly caught in an ice jam it would be crushed like a peanut shell, but it was intended to rise on the ice, and we expected to save it from the contingency of any ice chancery by keeping it on open fields of ice.

The conditions before us welcomed this treatment, or at least we thought so. We could give it a load of two tons, which affords an equivalent of one ton in traction force to haul, so that forty dogs, pulling fifty pounds each, would draw it, and this was a very lenient exaction. Circumstances vary, and the phases of Arctic mutability are almost incalculable, but once on the ice we anticipated success. The weak feature of our plan was the late start. If nothing could be negotiated, in the

slang parlance of exploration, we would return to Point Barrow and wait until later.

The long days invited us and the calculable chance of escaping the awful winter storms. What we probably could not cross were the large pressure ridges which are perhaps twenty feet high, a fourth of a mile in width, and which contain individual masses of ice as big as a small house, all in a *gallimaufry* of confusion. But we would flank them somehow; that was our purpose. The summer might give us good leads, winding, penetrating lanes of water drifting through labyrinthine courses to the "promised land." *It* was there, and it grew in our thoughts every day as more and more desirable. We did not care at what point we hit it. Four hundred miles ahead of us somewhere lay *terra firma*, and the conception grew in magnitude, not as another Greenland buried under thousands of feet of snow, a monstrous, appalling desert of ice scoured by hurricanes and chilled in death with a temperature half a hundred below zero. No! By an incomprehensible infatuation (the Professor had warped our judgments by his indefatigable promises) we were convinced that Krocker Land contained the resources of life.

Had not Peary at Independence Bay, on the very northern edge of Greenland, found flowers, grass and musk oxen? Had he not, when driving for the pole, "repeatedly passed fresh tracks of bear and hare together with numerous fox tracks"? And then those uncovered veins of gold seaming the primal rocks, how they swam before our eyes in yellow reticulations over square miles of quartz! We had become decidedly crazy about it all, for, unexpressed, but cherished in our deepest hearts were fantastic hopes of some indescribable faunal, floral, *human* remnant, like Conan Doyle's "Lost World" or the Kosekin in De Mille's "Strange *MS*

in a Copper Cylinder" in the Antarctic, and that romantic and sufficing Paradise that Paine depicted in "The Great White Way," or even the nightmare trances and inventions, the megalithic splendors and horrific glories of Atvatabar, or the mythic creatures in Etidorhpa. And yet our extravagancies of imagination were all finally obliterated, even to memory, in the grandeur and miracle of Reality.

In one respect we altered our first plan. Hopkins had wished to have three Americans selected to bring back our launch, and to pick us up again the next summer. We changed that. We would never come back, or if there were disappointments ("Inconceivable," said the Professor) we would get back our own way unaided, and—

(Erickson looked at me solemnly, and his voice struck a sepulchral tone that would have done credit to Paris at the tomb of the Capulets.)

"And Mr. Link, I am the only one that *did* come back. The Professor and Hopkins are in Krocker Land today; Goritz is dead."

(He resumed his narration.)

Captain Coogan steamed over to the ice pack which lay beyond the shore channels of open water, towing our launch, which certainly now seemed to dwindle into an inconsiderable implement of insertion in that trackless ocean of ice. He pushed his way through the "slob" ice, and jammed the nose of the "Astrum" upon the bulwarks of a great floe, whose uneven, rumpled and snow encumbered surface receded into a measureless distance, veiled, gray, dismal. We disembarked with the dogs, the launch came alongside, Goritz started the engine and she bucked the ice hopelessly. Then we windlassed her *onto* the pack, harnessed the dogs to her in five teams, one pack from the bow, two amidships and two at the stern, and started. Goritz and I were good teamsters, and Hopkins

made a fair try at it, with promiscuous difficulties. The rudder and tiller were unshipped. It looked as if she would "go." We did not make fifty feet in our trial, but the dogs certainly could pull her easily on her bone runners. Then came the unloading of our supplies from the steamer.

The day was most favorable, clear, cold and still. The wind with its usual aptitude for mischief in these northern asylums of meteorological chaos, was waiting to catch us later. We packed the supplies, sledges, two kayaks, guns, ammunition, stoves, oil, pemmican, and the assorted constituents of the regular provisioning of an Arctic expedition, into and on the launch, which made a very original and unique picture. The Eskimos who came offshore with the steamer and the dogs themselves seemed quite thoroughly perplexed, and doubtless entertained unspoken and unfavorable opinions as to our final success, and the dogs were perhaps dubious as to their own fate.

The closing hour of the day, scarcely separable now from the night, with the sun always above the horizon, found us ready. The dogs were an anxiety. We hoped to feed them on fresh meat in a large measure. Seals, the flipper, the bearded, and the hooded, were common. Goritz and I were good hunters, and a better shot than Hopkins never lived. Our formal relations and duties were pretty quickly arranged. Goritz was commander, with especial charge of the dogs, Hopkins was engineer, I was steward, and the Professor combined, very happily, the services of cook and scientific observer. We started with one hundred dogs, double perhaps our actual needs, but the sometimes sudden and unaccountable mortality among these animals justified our precaution.

Then came the leave taking and, for the first time, an explicit avowal of our intentions, with

Krocker Land pictured as our destination, and also with the renewed stipulation, enforced by a signed agreement and the additional security of prepayment, that Coogan should return the following year and look for us. I have said we did not intend to return. We did not, but then that reservation was a hidden, peculiarly communal feeling, unspoken and realized between ourselves, as a psychological dithyramb which we didn't confess or particularize, but which coerced us insensibly, as a mission does a prophet, an ambition a conqueror, or a dream a poet. Externally our demeanor was of the ordinary rational type. Coogan should come back for us—OF COURSE.

It was picturesque and unprecedented, that leave taking. The Arctic scene, the outlandish and piled up "Pluto," the waiting, serviceable dogs, alert and incredulous, the swarthy, grimy, wrinkled, heterogeneous natives, ourselves on one side of the pictorial composition, Coogan, Stanwix, Phillips, Spent on the other, with the crew in an amazement of disgust hanging over the steamer's taffrail, perched in the rigging, or sauntering near us, and that illimitable ice packed sea, imperturbably plotting our destruction. Hopkins delivered the valedictory.

"My friends," he said with a profound sweep of his cap, and a big obeisance that made the Eskimos shout with glee, "we're off for parts unknown. You probably entertain a rather hopeful feeling that we'll never come back. May be. You never can tell. At this end of the earth the unusual usually happens. However, we're not worrying. Not in the least. To miss the resumption of your acquaintance would distress us, and might hurt your feelings, but it's a case of taking what comes, and kicking don't go *up here*. You're all aware of that. No, you mustn't put us in a class by our-

selves. We are just part of the bunch, that for the last one hundred years or more has been leaving cards at the door of Our Lady of Snows, with an occasional intimation on the part of her ladyship that the visitors were welcome, but generally with a bolted and barred entrance, and an upset of snow, ice, wind and zeros from the upper stories of her palatial residence, that compelled an inglorious departure, or left the gentlemen in question dead on the doorstep. Well, we're ready to join the previous company.

"Only I don't think so. I'm not in the least nutty—I hope you catch me—and there are scientific reasons—" Hopkins patted the back of the Professor—"scientific reasons for banking on a safe return, with the goods, for all of us. When that happens, my friends, you'll be very glad to see us. Nothing will be too good for us, nothing too handsome. The ordinary brand of explorer won't be in it with us, for if that kind gets back with his clothes on, and the breath in his body, he gets in the picture supplements, is put up for sale to the highest bidder for receptions, cornerstone laying, and memorial exercises; he can put the whole country to sleep listening to his talk at one hundred per—minute!—and is never known to disappear from the public eye until he crosses the Styx on another kind of expedition from which there certainly is no 'come back.'

"That won't be our way. When next we reach New York, and the land of the free and the home of the brave, our suit cases will be so full of boodle that you won't be able to shut them with a steam compressor, and we can give you cross references to all the original sources of all the gold that the world ever had or can have. The trusts won't be in it, John Rockefeller will dwindle into invisibility, and the bunko lords and potentates on the other side of

the big pond, always fishing for *big* money will just scramble to get in first to sell their junk crowns to us. JUST WAIT. If there's an income tax on our return, we'll undertake single handed to run the government and, what's more expensive, buy up the politicians. Fact, Captain Coogan; fact, Mate Stanwix; fact, Engineer Phillips; fact, Jack Spent; fact, all of you!" And Hopkins executed another inclusive gyration, "And now, Good bye."

I don't think his audience took him in, or else their previous convictions were only somewhat strengthened by this nondescript allocution. The Professor smiled benignly. Goritz grunted approval, I felt queerly elated. Coogan came forward, hoped it would all turn out right, promised to look for us next summer, told us to stack up all the spare meat we could when the winter set in and shook hands. There was no more speech making; the rest came forward and shook hands too, as did all the Eskimos. Jack Spent, the carpenter, with his spectacles on his nose, and his brushy whiskers stiffened out like a privet hedge, tried to sing a song, which by reason of its quavering falsetto brought howls from the Nuwukmeun. Its import ran:

> "Good Luck to you my trusty mates,
> Good Luck and Fortune brave,
> May God and all the kindly Fates
> Your souls and bodies save."

The groups turned back, the grave Eskimos climbing in last, over the "Astrum's" rail. The steamer backed out of the "porridge," and we, impatient to be off, trimmed up the dogs, tightened the ropes over the pyramidal freight, and cheering as we heard the parting whistles from the "Astrum," soon hazily obscured in a rising evening dusk, went northward over the great ice field before us.

ON THE ICE PACK

The dogs were alert, the yacht-sledge went along well, the ice was sloppy but fairly smooth, and the floe had apparently escaped the contusions, bumps and collisions, which heap up these Arctic rafts with mounds, faults and pressure ridges, over which our unusual equipage never could have made its way. As it was, we at times traveled slowly enough, avoiding inequalities and dodging obstreperous humps. Towards evening of that first day the thermometer fell, an easterly wind came out of the sullen eastern sky, the snow flakes floated thickly in the air, and the sun glared like a gigantic ruby in the west, across which scurried veils from snow banks, eclipsing and revealing it at inconstant intervals—an augury of a storm.

We camped; that is we unharnessed the dogs, who proceeded, accordingly to the conventional style, immemorially recorded, to tie themselves up into yelping snarls of fur and harness; we lit our stove, partook of tea and pemmican, biscuit and marmalade (Yes, Mr. Link, *marmalade*) and slipped into protected nooks, amid the boxes on our diminutive ark. As the wind was rising we turned her lengthwise to the wind to prevent a capsize, wedged her forward and, under warning to jump to the ice if anything happened—a generalized warning for almost every sort of disturbance—tried to sleep.

It was a long time before dreams came to me, and when they did come they were unwelcome, for I seemed to be helplessly struggling up an inclined plain of ice over which flowed a sheet of icy water. I woke with a start. A roaring sound, almost stunning in its loudness, came through the snowladen air. The snowfall had increased and might have deadened the distant report had it not been for the hissing wind which brought the sound sharply to our ears, mingling it menacingly with its own sibilant fury.

Another and another! We all tumbled out on the ice. The floe shook. We distinctly felt its tremors under our feet, and, as it were, subterranean cracking and splitting noises developed underneath us, as if the floe might break. It was an anxious moment. But the floe was some eight feet thick, a resistant mass that might easily, however, succumb to cleavage surfaces. The booming sound ceased, but a prolonged crushing and rattling followed. Goritz clapped his hands. It seemed an unaccountable exhibition of spirits.

"Well," exclaimed Hopkins, "what do you make of it?"

"The best thing for us. We've got another length laid out for us on the straight track to Krocker Land. This floe probably ended off there somewhere," he pointed northeast, "and now another has struck it, crumpling the edges. We're not making such progress as we thought. The whole sea is in motion, but pretty nearly due east, so that as long as we go forward the easting does not hold us back on the northing, or very little."

"What do you say to breaking up camp now. Let's see what's happened," suggested Hopkins.

"Certainly," chimed in the Professor, "Krocker Land has a long coast of course. The nearer we get to it the greater likelihood of eddies, conflicting currents, flood tides and even favoring winds driving us ashore. I'm for the advance."

"And I," I concurred. We dug out the dogs, who were not very deeply covered, fed them, had tea and biscuit and some potted beef stew, and were off. Goritz calculated we had covered eight miles in northing, though our speculative way around obstacles had made the actual stretch spanned much longer.

Curiosity and suspense conflictingly urged us to make haste. The snow died away with the wind,

and the sun, running its cartwheel course along the horizon, again watched us from the east in a clear sky. It was a "gorgeous Arctic day." The summer heat had not yet too strongly prevailed, and the air almost sparkled over the dazzling splendor of the ice, undulating where it was seen in spaces somewhat cleared of snow, or spread with the deep ermine of the snow itself, which again, in rifts, drifts or circular heaps, reflected the sun like a firmament of pinpoint stars. The snow, melting, became compressed, and at length a duller lustre relieved our eyes of the strain of the almost insupportable brilliancy of the morning hours.

We had made sluggish headway, the wet snow clogging and detaining us; indeed we lightened the load on the yacht-sledge, and used the sledges and extra dogs to improve our progress. About noon we saw the results of the night's collision. A toppling but not very high pressure ridge had soared upward between our floe and another, presumably larger, for it had overtaken the one we were on. On that floe we must ourselves continue our advance, for already to the north and west we saw the broad leads of open water, indicated to Goritz's experienced eyes by the dark "water blink" seen, as he told us, the day before.

But how to surmount the barrier of ice blocks? Goritz and Hopkins went forward to investigate, the Professor and myself watching the dogs whose sudden alternations of obedience and mutiny kept us perpetually active. Hopkins found a less prominent section of the ridge, where the slanting and unevenly disposed blocks might be flattened to aid our progress, or be shattered into fragments, with dynamite. We adopted Peary's expedient in shaking the "Roosevelt" free of ice at Lincoln Bay. Dynamite sticks attached to poles were stuck among the blocks, and connected by wires to our

battery. Then we turned on the current. The explosion seemed to stop our hearts and breath, but if it did we were conscious enough to wonder at the fountain of splintered ice that rose like a geyser in the air, shimmering too with ten thousand irises against the sun, as it subsided with clatter and tinkling to the floe.

We had cleared our way and to our exultation the avenue opened showed us a wonderfully level and unencumbered field of ice. This obstruction might have been circumvented by taking to the water, but too late we realized the danger of being crushed in the battling floes that swirled together with the current or were driven by the winds. It was a prudent measure to keep to the ice at present. Our launch was flat, rounded and intended, like the "Fram," to rise over the squeezing ice blocks. But would it? It seemed a trifle topheavy, with its varied load. An upset would have been fatal; the dogs would be lost.

And now joy ruled, hope rose, the promise seemed granted. Oh, the incurable madness of human dreams. A gleam of light betokens the full day; it may be only a ray from a lantern, or the quiet before the storm gives assurance of eternal peace; it may be but the presage of the tempest.

We drove in triumph through the dismantled gateway, pierced by the convulsion of those yellow sticks of doom. Out on the white field, on which perhaps only the wind had left its imprint, which no eye but that all-seeing orb of day had ever scanned, whose silence only the winds, the waves, the storming ice had ever broken, and which now, the first time since Eternity began its reign there, was rudely assailed—we imagined it as an astonished deity—by yelping dogs and four hurrahing mortals!

The snow was deep and melting, but our dogs (Goritz had harnessed all the dogs and they were

still in good condition) dragged the strange bulk of our ice yacht with its rocking cargo at a topping speed. Exhilaration reigned, we were hilarious with confidence. It was not long before Hopkins, in spite of the heavy trudging, indulged in some characteristic musical levity, and his baritone notes finely contrasted with the silence of that void, in which we alone seemed sentient and animated.

It was a college reminder, and I just recall that the refrain had a most freakish incongruity:

"'Twas on the Arctic polar pack
I smoked my last cigar.'"

Well, the merriment did not last long. In about an hour we saw before us a rising hillside, the snow sloping up to an elevation of twenty feet or more and having drifted in thick mounds above and below it. We halted. Goritz plunged forward and struggled to the top of the eminence. We noticed him turning from side to side, leaning forward, looking backward too over our heads, tramping up and down like a dog on a lost scent. Then he waved his arms. We understood his summons. I watched the dogs, and Hopkins and the Professor ran on, tumbling into the white heaps, apparently hitting slippery surfaces below, which sent them sprawling in a splutter of white dust. The three men at length stood together and their gesticulations made black strokes against a white-gray sky. There was rain coming. I knew we had struck a break; there was a bad hole ahead with a poor chance of getting over it. Slowly the three returned, and it was Hopkins who gave the first intimation of the difficulty.

"Mr. Erickson, we've been a little 'previous' in our expectations. I think perhaps that psalm of joy was a mistaken indulgence on my part, or else I unconsciously hit the nail on the head and—our

last cigar *will* be smoked here and a few other last things may happen along with it. Go up and look at the scenery."

He motioned to the snowhill. I did not need the invitation, I was already on my way, noticing Goritz's gravity and the absence of the Professor's static grin. And in the interval that may be allowed between my first step and my surmounting the snow bank covering the topsy-turvy *abattis* of ice blocks, a paragraph of explanation may be wisely inserted.

Anyone familiar with experiences of Arctic voyagers in this western Arctic sea, as for instance the thrilling pages of DeLong's diary in the disastrous "Jeannette" expedition, will recall the fact of the broken condition of the polar pack in the summer, and its hitherto almost invariably pictured confusion of peaks, ridges and pits. Such a person would question the truthfulness of the few previous pages and note incredulously the absence of any remonstrance on the part of the "Astrum's" officers at our foolhardy undertaking. There was remonstrance enough however. We were told we could not live in the broken, smashing, surging ice; that there was no even ice floor; that everything was uneasy, perilous, shifting, open; that we should wait until winter had solidified the mass, and then "just hike it north."

And we knew pretty well ourselves just what everyone else had seen and recorded. But we took the chance, and by a perfect miracle of opportunity found there was, outside of Point Barrow a marvelous field of ice suited for our *progress.* (The real word turned out to be *occupancy.*)

Well, I got to the top of the snow pile, and my heart beat a rapid retreat to my boots at the sight before me. Ice, ice, ice, but everywhere in blocks smiting each other, rolling, rocking, jamming, and

all together crying aloud in a jargon of groans, shivers, reports, grumbles, growls, like packs of quarreling dogs or wolves. It was a disconcerting, discouraging spectacle, and it stretched endlessly away on every side. And in the middle distance, looming larger each instant, rose a floeberg that came on, shoving to the right and left the ice shards about it, resistlessly, as the steel prow of a cruiser or battleship might sweep a flotilla of boats and barges from the path of its imperious progress.

Its pinnacle blazed in the sun; its prow, a pointed ice foot, pierced the obstacles before it with a rattling discharge of rending and splitting; then came an ominous silence and the powerful ice ram rushed down upon us through softer or smaller particles that brushed to each side in parting waves. A few minutes more and its collision with our floe would follow, and then—? I saw too quickly we could make no headway in that hurly-burly of disorder, and then the thought flashed on me that in the pathway of this rushing dreadnought of the north lay death and destruction.

I leaped down the pressure ridge and regaining my feet at its base ran on shouting to the others, who were arrested by my sudden return, "Back! Back! Back!" waving to them to get away. Goritz understood, the rest followed him. The dogs were wheeled round, the crack of the long whips sounded in their ears, and the sting of the lash tingled on their backs. The lumbering "Pluto" swept in a half circle, and was shot along the trail we had just made towards the south. Perhaps we had gained a hundred yards, when the jolt came. It threw us on our faces and upset the dogs. It came with a queer, smothered roar that sharpened into a long, rending shriek; the ice beneath shook with the blow, and then—parted! A seam opened below the "Pluto," and water

spouting from underneath covered the rearward dogs. The Professor and Hopkins were on the separated section. They sprang forward, while Goritz jumped to his feet in a flash, and played his whip like a demon on the dogs who seemed, to my eyes, tied up in its rapid convolutions.

The yacht-sledge crossed the chasm, and I, a short distance behind, on the "calf" made by the impact, pitched into the gap. I came up like a cork and instantly felt Hopkins' hand in the neck of my coat. He dragged me out and for the moment we were safe.

But behind us ploughed on the *devastator*. A closer view revealed a great hulk of ice blocks heaped up, up-ended pieces of the floeberg, perhaps forty feet high. It would strike us again, the shock of its first blow had allowed the strong current to turn its extension northward, and it was slowly revolving on a water pivot, and another face was about to deliver a second disrupting blow further along. There were no councils held just then. We scampered out of danger at our best speed, leaping to the sides of the "Pluto" and helping to pull with the dogs, all together, with a simultaneous inspiration. It worked well. We were slipping along fast, thanks to the level surface, when BANG, and then *bang* again, and then a fierce ripping sound.

"A wallop on the slats, and a jolt under the chin. *That rocks us*," exclaimed Hopkins spasmodically.

Goritz was keeping the air over the dogs blue with imprecations and hot with the winnowing lashes of his whip. We were too late. Twenty or more feet ahead a black jagged line suddenly ran over the ice, a million unseen hands seemed to have seized the farther edge of the seam and pushed it open with frightful speed. Deliberation was impossible, but there must be a decision of some

sort, "*right off the bat,*" as Hopkins would say. It came.

Goritz called back, "Shoot it! Loosen the dogs! All aboard!"

We cast off the loops from the cleats, always intended for quick release, and prepared for embarkation. The word "prepared" does not fit, for it was preparation wound to the top-notch of precipitancy. Goritz turned the forward teams of dogs and slowed the momentum of the boat-sledge. She slid on, however, and almost dumped into the lead that had been formed; a fortunate hump of ice blocked her and made her cargo of boxes and tins rattle absurdly. It had a silly effect like the wail of a baby in a storm. I long remembered it. Getting the dogs stowed was troublesome. We had seventy (thirty had been discarded and sent back with Coogan) but pemmican pitched on the boat hurried them aboard and kept them there. Then we pushed the boat overboard, holding her back with boathooks. In another instant we were on her, too, and the little voyage towards the receding ice began—towards the larger mass, which we believed to be still connected with the ice field we had first traversed. That was a trifle, but it was another matter lifting her to the surface of the pack. We sloped the edge with picks, anchored a capstan on the ice, and by main strength hauled her on, putting in the dogs at the final pull. We fed the dogs, fed ourselves, and took time to think. As Goritz remarked, "there was some room for thought."

Our dilemma was this: Should we try to regain the first floe cake, through the gateway we had made in the pressure ridge, or stay where we were? In any case the complete breakup of our platform involved sticking to the boat, trusting that she would not be crushed and waiting for the colder

days when the cementation of the floes would begin, when we could push northward somehow over the ice. A reconnaissance settled the question. Our first floe had parted, the pressure ridge had disappeared; south of us, as all around us, was the treacherous, shifting, pulverized ice pack (the particles of the pulverization were often small rafts). We drilled the ice and found it from four to six feet thick, and took our position in the center. We were beleaguered; as with Marshal Bazaine it was *J'y suis, j'y reste*, for each of us. A storm was brewing, the wind rose and, as Mikkelsen has described it, the ice floes "ducked and dipped and hacked at each other, crushing and being crushed."

"As long as our island holds out we're safe enough, and if some good leads develop we might strike the water, and make off for another," said Goritz.

"There's no place like home," said Hopkins. "Stick here. We're drifting in the right direction. When we sight the metropolis of Krocker Land we can hoist our colors and, if there are proper harbor facilities, come up the bay under full steam. I guess the Professor understands the formalities of these upper regions. He can introduce us to the mayor and the aldermen and get us the freedom of the city, and perhaps we can negotiate a commercial treaty that will give the United States of America the monopoly of the ice crop. If we could get an attachment on these rory-borealises for the movies, it would be a mint."

The Professor ignored these pleasantries. He also believed our safest plan was to stay on the floe and drift at present. Game would turn up for the dogs—seal, walrus—and when we touched Krocker Land (persistent iteration had banished all doubts now of its reality) we would find bear.

"And really," the Professor continued, "nothing could be more favorable than our prospects at

present. We are drifting northwest; wind and tide are pushing us along on the right course. Krocker Land, my friends, is not one hundred miles away. This coming storm will help amazingly, and I see no reason why we shouldn't raise sail."

The suggestion was overruled by Goritz. The danger of collisions was too great, and the headway might be faster than we could overcome if we were threatened with one. The ice was getting softer; pools of water glistened all around us, and a bad blow might break us up.

Watches were kept, and as the light lasted the full twenty-four hours, we were not likely to be surprised by unsuspected invasions. The higher floebergs were to be feared. Their bases, prolonged far below, furnished push surfaces to the tide for perhaps hundreds of feet, and their mass supplied momentum. They were dangerous neighbors. And now the storm rose furiously around us. Except for our peril it was a spectacle we might have enjoyed. The Professor alone was absolutely unconcerned, and his nonchalance calmed our own apprehensions.

The clouds in strips and bulging banners were carried high above us. Streamers they seemed, from the eastern sky where the high lying cirrus flakes, slowly expanding into shapeless patches, had already delivered their usual warning. These again were soon blotted out in the onrushing scud all around us. A dull yellow light at first spread its sickly tint over the ice field, and the sun, darkened and blurred, was soon utterly cloaked from view. The wind rose quickly, brushing close to the surface of the ice, ushering in interminable strife among the pitching blocks. They ground together, and the swell, started below them, kept their edges pounding, while a tumult of groans and creaking noises like the smashing of heavy glass

raised an unceasing din, a din indeed that possessed some of the elements of a wild, fascinating rhythm. The rain came in pelting downpours, whipped into horizontal sheets by the blast, and then with a sudden drop of temperature changed to blinding snow flurries, that buried everything in white dust, and sometimes smote us with the sharpness of myriad-edged microscopic needles.

The water washed in long flows over the sides of the berg, and the berg itself rocked and shook, threatening to start our ice-yacht into motion, and to carry her and her precious cargo into the whirling, fighting ice about us. Fortunately it continued to grow colder, and the snow, besides offering us means of banking the yacht, stem, stern, and prow, and ramming her bowl-shaped sides with a stiff embrace from which a jolt would hardly free her, provided a bed for the poor dogs, who were frantic with misery, howling and whining in disgust.

Our berg had shrunk considerably; it was only a remnant, an angle of the big field we had entered with such rejoicing, and we knew it was getting smaller. When the dogs had quieted, and we felt that the launch was immovable, we crept into the box cabin and gratefully partook of hot tea, warmed pemmican, and biscuit, with cups of soup to "wash it down." It was a parnassian feast, and though we were anxious, the snug refuge and the soul-stimulating grub brought us to the verge of exultation. Even the hard knocks that the pack received attested to our progress, and if it held together, and the blizzard lasted, we would win some miles of our journey, almost without effort, and, as Goritz said, "it was just the sort of a blow to clear the track."

I certainly had fallen asleep. Pictures had risen like projections on a screen, one after the other, in my mind, one melting deliciously into its prede-

cessors, and all linked together by the memories of home. My mother, my sister and her two boys under the pine tree by the side of the dreaming pond, holding in its reflexions the cloud-flecked bosom of the blue sky, and the slanting cliff, the hillside graveyard, and the reversed boats moored to the little dock, and then the dash of the phaeton down the road, the group waving their kerchiefs at me, and my own answering salute, the turn of the road, the dark passage through the spruce forest, the cleared farmsides with the red houses, and the clustering friends along the filled fences, cheering, and then—a terrific bump—the phaeton had smashed against a stone, and—!

"Wake up, Erickson, all hands busy."

It was Goritz's voice bellowing in my ear, it was his hand, shaking me like a giant by the shoulder. I leaped to my feet, dazed and, leaping to conclusions as quickly, thought the ice had split our keel and we were sinking. Everything was dark around me. I heard Hopkins swearing over the oil lamps which had fallen to the floor and the Professor mumbling further away. And then came a curiously stifled boom.

"Well, what's up?" I stuttered.

"The ice cake is breaking up. There—it goes again," groaned Goritz.

Another report, louder, keener, like a gun shot, was heard above the babel of noises that the wind, the waters now and the straining boat, not to speak of the cargo on the deck, rustled and scraped throughout its many joints and the crevices between the boxes, promiscuously raised. There was a pause, then came another report that made us all jump to the door; it seemed almost as if the launch were cracking beneath our feet. It was a detonation directly below us. Outside the wailing, demoniacal storm was raging. Our cargo, thanks to its

unbreakable anchorage to the deck, seemed safe, but on all sides of us was water, laden with ice blocks that beat trip-hammer blows against the sides of the launch. OUR DOGS WERE LOST!

No, not all. Ten had struggled from their confinement in the snow and had taken refuge on the boat. The rest, swallowed up in the sundering of the raft, had perished in the foaming sea. The boat was tossing, and the waves would have swamped us had not the watertight door of the cabin house been shut. She was drifting helplessly amid the ice-strewn billows, whose retreating slopes were sheeted white with a lather of foam. We were holding onto anything convenient, and were drenched, but finally Goritz and Hopkins found their way somehow with the agility and tenacity of cats to the stern, and shipped the rudder, and in a few moments—they seemed hours—we were in line with the wind, and racing before it, lifted and shot onward by the waves that, luckily for us, were not dangerously crested, but were peaked hills of water, whose ebullitions were somewhat suppressed by the masses of ice distributed over them. We seemed like playthings, and like playthings the giant of the deep tossed us on, thus humorously willing to aid us to our destination if we could stand the treatment.

The storm would half subside and then, as if maddened at its clemency, would renew its violence. As Hopkins put it, "She certainly can come back good and hearty, gets her second wind and takes a right hook, just as if nothing had happened. But after all it's no raw deal. We're covering ground fine, and not turning a hair to pay for it, provided we can hold together. The insides of the weather man are hard to fathom, and he has never been credited with too big a supply of the milk of human kindness, but if he isn't putting it over us hard with a goldbrick, it looks to me as if we might soon

expect to run up against the revenue cutter of the Krocker port. I suppose we can declare these goods as essential to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and beat the duty."

It grew lighter on the third day, and the awful tumult lapsed suddenly into a peacefulness amazing and ideal. The temperature rose and the skies cleared, the sun was unclouded and intensely brilliant for these latitudes, and, most glorious of all, the ocean was clear of ice, only the green rolling waves sweeping over the limitless distances, flattening out against that magic circle where sky and water meet, and where we half expected to see the emergent peaks of mountains.

And the next days were wonder days. The air was even balmy; the sea, cleared of its litter of ice, invited us with green gleaming undulations to tempt its mercies still farther. Our engine was started, and the "Pluto," albeit a little slowly, forged on, and later, aided by a sail that drew every wind that stirred, advanced over the ocean, with even a flattering pretence to speed; her safeness had been assumed at the start.

Except for the destruction of our dogs whom we had already begun to admire and to cherish, nothing seemed wanting for our perfect peace of mind except a little more confidence that this unknown world, now rapidly approaching, would offer us a decent foothold; that it would not be an ice-buried continent, the asylum of all the terrors of the north, awful in its solitude, remorseless in its scorn, brutal in its revenge. Well, the Professor undertook to calm our doubts, and while he exerted his culinary skill in the infinite variety of combinations of soups, canned fruits, preserves, bread, cake, biscuits, candy, pemmican, wine, custards, pie and macaroni, he expended a more valuable art in convincing us that we were indeed to discover a pleas-

ant country, and was not averse to beguiling us into raptures over his fabulous pictures of its possibilities—"spinning yarns" and "pipe dreams," Hopkins contemptuously styled them.

"My friends," said the Professor, sprinkling dried raisins into the yellow dough which would later be transformed into a delectable cake, "this Krocker Land has been the dream of ages. It is the ancient Eden, and it is preserved to us in the records of prehistoric men who have retained the childhood stories of still more ancient peoples. Relatively it is a legend because no one has seen it. In reality it will establish the unity of tradition, as it ought," and so on and on, with some new notions of the oblateness of the earth's form, and the fact that at the north we were some thirteen miles nearer the earth's center, and then some more about the unequal distribution of the interior fluid masses of rock, and the great probability that such unsolidified magmas, radiating great heat, might occur in the boreal regions of the earth's crust to produce local warmth. But of course his great point was the depression idea. He harped incessantlyon that.

"It looks to me," said Hopkins as we sat round our little mess table in the cabin, "that if the going stays good, and the food lasts, we surely will get there. Holes are, however, dangerous things, and Americans don't relish getting into them too deep. The grub question is important. We've stacks of it just now, but this invincible habit of eating is getting the best of it, and starvation is a most inglorious death. Do you think, Professor, that this Krocker Land has got any live stock on it?"

The pained expression, of having been wounded in the house of a friend, that came over the Professor's face, as he wiped his mouth and reluctantly paused in his consumption of a ham sandwich was very delightful.

"In Krocker Land, Mr. Hopkins" this ceremonial gravity was met by a severe, deferential attention on Hopkins' part that was perfect—"we may expect to meet a concentrated reflexion of the palearctic and the neoarctic faunas. Along the coast there will be whales, walrus, seal, bear, the shores will be tenanted by the eider duck; and snipe, geese, ducks, ptarmigans, plover, will be found inland, with the reindeer, the fox, hare, and the musk ox, and—" here the Professor paused with a deliberation intended to impress us— "and I should not be surprised to meet with the American bald headed eagle."

We all shouted, and the Professor hid his face and his satisfaction in his sandwich. But Hopkins accepted the challenge unflinchingly:

"Good, Professor. If the American eagle is up there, it certainly is God's country, and a white man can live in it!"

CHAPTER IV

Krocker Land Rim

On the fourth day came another change, for in these haunts of the snow gods and the ice gods the shadow of storm darkens quickly, and if these deities descend to earth they wrap themselves thickly in shades and mists and white trailing togas, or else they just blow upon the earth their coldest breath, killing all human life, lest they be seen of men. That strange Arctic hush, the misty light over everything, that grayish white light caused by the reflexion from the ice being cast high into the air against masses of vapor, that Nansen has described, encompassed us. A mist, a fog, rose later, or else descended, and Goritz said we were near land, in which I concurred. Our excitement was intense. Was the great revelation to be vouchsafed?

The fog of fogs grew, advancing upon us from the four points of the compass, rising around us from the water like spectres, descending from the skies in soft, insensible folds, buried in the thickening nebula, until, we could hardly see an arm's length in front of the boat. Then a chill came with it, light breezes from the northwest ("From land," said Goritz) and then as if some resistance from the east was roused into action, another tempest gathered there, rushing ravenously upon us with a blind rage, with wrack and cloud, with rain and snow,

the last interference of the elements to destroy us, before the secret of the north was revealed—a senseless protest, for their madness only flung us swiftly forward to the forbidden coasts.

The "Pluto" plunged and rolled; her rounded, swollen bottom made her an easy prey to the balloting waves, and unless she could be kept in the wind her overturn seemed certain with ourselves spilled into the distracted waters. It was hard to do this, hard to stick to her deck at all, when every now and then some vicious poke sent her across, and we would cling like barnacles to rope or rail or stanchion. The tiller was jerked from Goritz's hand and its arm dealt him a blow that almost disabled him. I was pitched headlong on the forward deck and narrowly escaped rolling overboard; some of the cargo aboveships slipped its fastenings and was lost, threatening the dislocation of everything. This danger was too serious, and Hopkins and I did our best to avert it, but do what we could or might, the load was crumbling away before our eyes, loosened from its fastenings by the fierce storm. Box after box disappeared in the gloom. The dogs were hustled into the cabin, whence their howls and terrified whines issued like the cries of lost souls. We were now pretty well alarmed, and our predicament strongly resembled the prelude to complete annihilation.

Suddenly the Professor shouted, "The ice—the ice again!" and the next instant we were pinned in a pack of formidable blocks that thundered around us, lodged on our deck, and beat into ruins, as the waves lurched or hurled them over us, the frail battlement of boxes which contained our supplies. My heart sank within me. EVERYTHING GONE! Not quite. There was something left in the cabin, but on that raging waste of waters—? The question stuck in my throat. In

that instant I seemed separated, sundered from all the others, the concentrated agony of my terror—for terror black and paralyzing it was—robbed me almost of consciousness. Almost as in a trance I heard Hopkins cry, "Look! Look!"

Something happened. Actually it was a meteorological phenomenon brought about by the proximity of mountain masses perhaps; to my mind it seemed like the visible extension of the hand of God to pluck us from destruction. Above us appeared a bright spot that was widening rapidly; the motion within it was apparent, and the velocity of the atmospheric rotations within it must have been almost incalculable. It was becoming a monstrous orifice into which poured the abominable chaos that was overwhelming us; its enormous vortex swallowed up the storm, transferred in its outrageous coursing from earth to heaven. The deity of Krocker Land favored our approach. He had rebuked, repelled, dissipated the tempest.

The scenic shock was really tremendous. The dramatic intensity of the change, the startling evolution from storm and darkness, blistering winds, soaked with snow and rain, the earth-driven rolling clouds, black and gray, tossed over us and engulfing us in blankets of cold wetness that sent shivering thrills of dread through our bodies, as the waves mounted and pounced on us like beasts of ravin! And then this magnificent uplift! Oh, the calm, superhuman glory of it! The shattered *debris* of the broken tornado vanishing above us, and—as its myriad shaped or distorted curtains rose—the sunlit dark mountain peaks, the bare rocky crags, jeweled with snow, the ice strewn beaches of Krocker Land, evolving superbly before our eyes, as if created then, at that very moment, by the transfiguring finger of the Almighty.

Mr. Link, it was the most sublime spectacle imaginable; for me it was the climax of my life. I shall never forget its wonder, its power, its amazing enforcement of the idea of creation.

I don't think there was much difference between any of us in our feelings at that moment; its immensity appalled us in a way, and then it thrilled us. Temperamental details were submerged in the overpowering sensation. At first perhaps we thought it an apparition, a mirage. It was unreal. And then when the realization was acknowledged, to put it bluntly, we gazed in stupid astonishment. We were about four miles away, when the vision broke, standing on our deck, from which every vestige of our supplies had been carried off by the ruthless wind and water. I believe we stood that way for a quarter of an hour, before we quite came to our senses, with the waves and wind still driving us headlong on that apocryphal beach. Then we began to take notice and to take precautions.

The shore was partially encumbered with shore ice, and the lashing waves were throwing upon it other small and large fragments. The coast was low, sandy, shelving, cut up by a few projecting and sand buried ridges of rock, which, like spurs, passed back into the interior, and may have been the outspread roots of the looming ranges beyond and behind them. Goritz managed to direct the launch upon a flat expanse of sand on which we landed with a thud that made the timbers creak. I think the Professor was the first to leap ashore, then Hopkins and myself, and at the last Goritz, with the painter. The next wave drove the boat further up the beach. Nothing now could budge her. Somehow we looked then to Goritz for orders.

"Better get everything out, and take an account of stock. This is good enough camping ground, until we get our bearings and perhaps a little

better hold on our wits. I hope the Professor's faunas are expecting us."

This oblique hint to the loss of our provisions dampened any ardor we might have succumbed to, in our enthusiasm over the discovery. We set to work with a will, and almost without a word. There were some welcome surprises. The dogs were safe, sound asleep in the cabin, exhausted by their fright. They became a solicitude, however, because of the additional mouths to fill, though, in a state of idleness, half rations would keep them well. But would we need them? Our ammunition and guns were safe, our oil and stove, alcohol, medical outfit, and six boxes of canned vegetables, pemmican, biscuit, tea, coffee, chocolate, in all perhaps three hundred pounds; and our spare clothing, for which we offered fervent thanks. One sledge was saved from the wreck, and one bruised and broken kayak. The portable tent was uninjured, and there remained a serviceable equipment of cans and pots, though for that matter one can for the preparation of our tea and coffee or chocolate, and one pot for miscellaneous stews, soups, and what Hopkins called "*hari-kari*," were all we needed. The watertight cabin had saved much.

When the review was finished, and we felt cheered over the immediate prospect, we drew up the "Pluto" on the beach, anchored her, as well as we could, and converted her into our camp. We were clamorously hungry and the dogs were raging. The Professor wasted no time, though just now the allowances were rigorously measured. It might be better when we caught sight of the Professor's "concentrated reflexion of the palearctic and neoarctic faunas." At the moment a sublime solitude surrounded us. Yet I had noticed high up on the shoulders of the rock and in the slight subsidences

that like saucers lay at their bases, the growth of plants, and the quick eye of the Professor had noted it too. Surely that meant game. I guess we both understood that, for the Professor worked over his fires and vessels with a boyish profusion of activity, and was inclined to be lavish in his ingredients (Goritz, watchful and prudent, stopped him), while something like elation sprang up within me and an utterly inappropriate yearning to sing and laugh and dance.

I remembered Mikkelsen's and Iversen's joy when they descended from the cold monotony and whiteness and treachery of the inland ice of Greenland to the habitable earth with its flowers, and life, and warmth. With Mikkelsen too vegetation had meant animal life. They seemed inseparable correlates. In Greenland it had been pigmy willow trees, six inches high, with trunks an inch thick, and blades of grass, and thick moss, and beautiful heather, and then—musk ox!

What it was here would be disclosed as soon as the evening meal was finished. We had all been curiously dumb since we had been thrown ashore, that is, there had been no reference made to our wonderful landfall. Perhaps we were speechless from sheer amazement, or some haunting dread that our return was impossible, or that we were on the margin, as it were, of bigger marvels. I think the latter feeling made us almost mute. Our fancies before we left Point Barrow had been high-strung and the visions wrought in our minds were almost mystical—I have explained that—but these had very completely vanished during the last days of turmoil and disaster, when the wonders we expected to encounter were more likely to have been found in another world than in this one. Yet you see they really had not vanished, they had shrunk somewhat, retreating into invisibility in the

crevices and holes of the mind, and now when the stupendous reality confronted us they rushed out from hiding, huger than ever, smothering us into silence with their immensity! A new World, what might not be in it? It was Hopkins who broke the trance that imprisoned us.

"That transformation took the gilt off any lightning-change stunt I ever have seen and— Of course, Professor, there isn't any guess coming that we've ARRIVED, that this is Krocker Land?" he said suddenly.

"Not the slightest," answered the Professor, filling our cups with chocolate, and in a matter of fact way that was final.

"We have absolutely reached a New Continent. Everything confirms that: Latitude, longitude, direction from Point Barrow, and the topography. It isn't Wrangel or Herschel or Harold or Bennett, or any part of the Franz Josef Archipelago. That splendid fringe of peaks hides inner valleys that decline into a central area of warmth, light and Life!"

I really think that we believed him. The glorious extravagance of the prediction, its superb audacity, its anomalous improbability subjugated us totally, because our startled expectations would be satisfied with little else. That was the psychology of it. And Mr. Link, the Professor was right. LISTEN!

Our position was on a flat, shelving coast, slowly rising to foothills, beyond which gaunt bare precipices towered apparently to uplands, from which soared the sharp serrations of a continuous cordillera. It made a noble picture. Snow covered the higher elevations, it lay in drifts in the lower chasms, it formed a light covering on the tableland but failed to approach nearer to the shore, which was a series of sand or rubble flats, embedding low backs,

pointed mounds, and dikes of diabase. Only at one point was a glacier visible. To the north, almost at the limit of vision we could see the glittering ribbon high up in the mountains. The days were shortening, and although the sun remained for most of the time above the horizon, nightfall was marked by its declination, when a peculiar tawny golden glow filled the air. The mountains were striped with light and shade, half roseate, half black as ink; the highlands were also in gloom, and between both the foothills made a beaded girdle of whiteness like a necklace of gigantic pearls on the dusky neck of an Ethiopian.

There was no question of turning back. An unappeasable hunger for discovery filled us. What lay beyond those pearly pinnacles? WHAT? Our plans were quickly laid. There was call for expedition, for the Arctic night was coming, and while sincerely, with three of us, some inexplicable provision seemed imminent for its replacement, Antoine Goritz resisted our madness at that point, and told us that if this was a dead world, nothing but the *dogs* would save us from death; our *retreat would have to be over the frozen polar sea.*

The first step was to find game: Seal, walrus, bear, ox, hare, anything. We divided into two skirmishing parties, Hopkins and I going to the right, Goritz and the Professor to the left. The dogs were tethered, and fastened to the launch. The Professor and myself had already collected some of the plants. How radiant and beautiful they seemed in that still untrodden asylum, the little green-leaved willows, a saxifrage, the yellow mountain poppy of Siberia (*Papaver nudicaule*), forget-me-nots, cloud berry, and in the boggy hollows cottongrass, spreading its wavy down carpet, while here and there tiny forests of bluebells swung their campanulate corollas! The cold pure

waters of the snows fed these alpine gardens, and we even detected the hum of insects amid the variegated patches of delicious bloom. Game? "Well I should smile," shouted Hopkins.

Hopkins and I, in splendid spirits, made our way to the upland, a distance of some five miles, and then through the snow, watching the slopes of the foothills that made ideal pasturages for the musk ox, if these "artiodactyls," as the Professor rather pompously spoke of them, were here at all. We had not gone far when up a ravine, where narrow meadows and boulder strewn intervals conducted, between two steep hills, a cascading stream, breaking from the craggy cliffs beyond, Hopkins espied a little herd of four cows, two calves, and a bull. Were they musk oxen? The horns looked different.

Hopkins skipped in glee, and, with his usual recourse to verse (preferably Lewis Carroll's), he hoarsely whispered:

> " 'What's this? I pondered. Have I slept
> Or can I have been drinking?
> But soon a gentler feeling crept
> Upon me, and I sat and wept
> An hour or so like winking.'

"Erickson, my pop first. I'll forego the tears. Stalk them up to windward."

The animals had not noticed our vicinity, although grazing and leisurely approaching us. We finally squatted behind a rock, and just a half hour later, as they reached the edge of the mimic field we fired. Hopkins stretched out the bull; it sank majestically to its knees, its head drooped, something like a groan escaped its throat, and it fell sideways. I was not so fortunate, nor skillful. I wounded one of the cows, but there was no attempt at escape. The herd pressed together, stamping a little but almost motionless, as if paralyzed with

terror, or robbed of volition by curiosity. Hopkins let fly again and my wounded cow glided to the ground. My second shot was fatal, and another helpless brute succumbed. Then as if stricken with a sudden consciousness of their danger, the rest of the herd trotted off, spared further decimation. Our larder would be well replenished, and we both knew now, with an unshaken conviction, that we were in a land of plenty.

"We should worry!" sniffed Hopkins sententiously. When we reached our quarry I was amazed to note the peculiar narrowness and elevation of the horns of the bull, and the dirty gray maculations on the black hair of the pelage.

"A new species, Spruce," I exclaimed.

"Well then," he replied, "here's where the Professor rings up the curtain on the textbooks, and—Say Alfred!—as I had first blood, and bagged the bull, why not hand it out as *Bos hopkinsi?*"

"By all means," I assented. When we got back, and we did not return empty handed we found Goritz and the Professor. They looked a little dispirited but our report put such a pleasant aspect on things that they quickly recovered. They had found nothing, but that was due to the pertinacity of the Professor in carrying Goritz off on a tour of investigation. They had crossed the tableland and had threaded their way half across the foothills, until they met the frowning crags skirting the mountain terrain. These were seamed with waterfalls pouring into some encircling canon below them, which again formed a channel for the escape of the gathered floods, but whither they went was undetermined. It was evident that the water of the streams came from the melting snowbanks lingering higher up on the mountains, and that the region was one of very heavy precipitation.

Goritz insisted on bringing in the meat, and

indeed our mouths watered for a juicy steak. The dogs were fed, and these insatiable beasts ravenously devoured the pieces we threw to them, until Goritz, fearing their consequent lethargy, drove them off half frantic, harnessed them, and accompanied by me took the sledge to our depot; returned with the carcasses and skins and ushered in a memorable night, lit by the futile rivalry of sun and moon.

There was first our supper when the Captain permitted a relaxation of his restriction, and the Professor plunged into the resources of our slender commissariat with a most reprehensible *abandon*. I believe we washed down our steak with *Eulenthaler*, a few bottles of which had still survived our perils. Then there was the Professor's ecstacy over the new species of *Bos*, for such it was, and his delighted acceptance of Hopkins' patronymic for its technical name. And then—our Council of War; war on the Unknown, the Mysteries of this new land, the perils before us, and those that might await us beyond those slumbering virginal crests, from whose pinnacles even now the clustering genii of the realm watched our intrusion with scorn and hatred!

Our debate was a little disputatious. Goritz was quite immovably for returning that winter, executing as much of a littoral survey as we could, to return another season with an equipped expedition, trusting to get back to Barrow, with the dogs, sledge, kayak and launch, and with meat stores from the *Bos hopkinsi*. The Professor vehemently and feverishly protested. Here we were on the brink of world-convulsing wonders. To decline the invitation so miraculously extended to us was flying in the face of all recorded traditions of exploration. It was an ignominious flight from insignificant dangers. He knew that beyond that por-

tentous circle of peaks lay an inverted cone holding within it warmth and civilization.

I think Goritz felt the appeal, but he was sagacious, a prudent man, and had no vainglorious desire to appropriate the forthcoming discoveries, which the Professor gloated over, for himself. He shook his head energetically. Then Spruce Hopkins, who with myself had only interjected questions and inquiring comments, and who with me was fascinated by the Professor's predictions and promises, suggested a compromise.

"My friends, I'm sort o' on the outside of this argument, though I guess my skin will get as much punishment, either way, as any one of you. Can't you come to terms on this easy ground? Get up there," and he waved his hand towards the serene splendid domes in their terrible beauty far above us, "and if the land goes *down*, as we might say *holewise*, we'll stick, but if it goes straight, level, or *up*, why we'll beat it home again. That's sense Goritz, and I guess, Professor, it's philosophy too."

This jocularity relieved the tension superbly, and whether Goritz and the Professor were quite clear as to how the provision should be interpreted, Goritz consented to make the attempt to reach "the rim," as the Professor called it.

The next days were days of anxious preparation. It was no child's play scaling that natural fortress, and within its labyrinth of parapets, bastions, moats, and demi-lunes, ramparts and ditches what unforeseen dangers lurked! Our chief concern was our stores; the inroads made upon them by the storm was serious, and the inconvenience of starving on the "rim," in sight of the *promised land* was disturbing. Our campaign would consist of making *caches* of meat on the uplands, taking our condensed food, tea and coffee on our backs, making forced marches to the summit, reconnoitering and

plunging on ahead, *if unanimous in that,* or else tumbling back, and setting our faces homeward. *Homeward*—the word seemed a mockery in that strange and hidden corner of the earth.

Another thing happened, though not quite unexpected. The wind had shifted to the west, bringing loose drifting ice and some hulking floebergs, and the squally twists, the livid streaks in the sky, and the sun's sepulchral palor had indicated some rising uneasiness skyward. The change came good and plenty later. The wind rose almost to a tornado, though there was no snow or rain, just a bitter cold searching wind. It smote the mountains. We could see the sky-rocketing volley of snow on their sides, and noted too that towards their tops there was no disturbance, indicating a a semi-icy condition of the snow there, perhaps better, perhaps worse for going. And now in the turning of a hand the crowding ice packs were back. As far as we could see their humps and fields spread everlastingly, and the chorus of groans, wheezes, and queer *hushing* sounds that they all sent up was astonishing.

Hopkins shot a bear, before the storm attained its top-notch of fury, which brought much cheerfulness to the camp. I never shall forget it. It was funny too; it might have been just as tragic. He and I were off to the west, reconnoitering for a possible easier entrance to the "rim," when Hopkins caught my arm nervously, and pointed out over the groaning packs, and said he saw something moving. I could not see it. We ventured out a little way on some near shore ice and were behind a slight pressure ridge, when a shockingly coarse growl issued from the other side and a moment later a big polar bear surmounted the pile, and laying both its front paws on the blocks, over which its face rose, most whimsically recalled the emergence of a preacher in

high pulpit. We were pretty well taken aback, but Hopkins slipped off his usual doggerel, *sotto voce* however—while the bear watched us critically—

"My only son was big and fine
And I was proud that he was mine,
He looked through eyes that were divine—
Indeed he was a BEAR."

And then he raised his rifle and—Bruin wasn't there. We jumped up on the ridge, clambered to the top and almost fell into his ursine majesty's arms. He had ducked down on seeing the rifle but hadn't budged from his position. It looked as if he had met hunters before. Hopkins blazed away, and I followed. The splendid beast gurgled and fell backward dead.

We had reached the foothills, crossed the uplands, made our caches of meat, stuffed the dogs and turned them loose—Goritz called it "burning our ships behind us"—and were creeping along the edge of the narrow deep chasm or canon which caught the waters from the cliffs, gathering them in an awful, tempestuous, writhing torrent, that became almost maniacal in its agony where hidden rocks stopped its course, or where it dropped into black abysses. We must cross that chasm, climb the cliffs, before we could begin the ascent of the mountains. The chasm was twenty or thirty feet wide, the cliffs rose above it, from our level, about one hundred feet, and below us they descended to the water trough, one hundred feet more. The problem was to reach the bottom of the chasm, bridge the raging brace, and then work up the cliffs. It looked like a fly's job. And what disclosures the roofs of the cliffs and the mountains beyond had we could only guess. These difficulties had been anticipated, in one way; we had strong wire rope, a flexible cable made of copper wire and skin.

Crawling on hands and knees we were studying the sides of the chasm, and not infrequently Goritz would suspend himself, held by the rest of us, over the frightful gulf, to determine where we might safely enter this *inferno*, with a prospect of spanning the seething, spouting, vociferous river, and of scaling the black and jagged wall on the other side. Our search was unavailing. We had explored the bank for more than a mile. The delay was maddening. Suddenly the Professor, who had been silent, and had been studying the black and red walls opposite, with occasional long examinations eastward with the glass, exclaimed:

"We are making a mistake. Our course is up and to the back of the glacier. These cliffs are sedimentary; they lie on the eruptive crystallines of the mountains; the river runs west; the glacier has dammed its course eastward, where it should flow, following the dip of the slates and sandstones. It cuts the dip, and the glacier has crossed its path and filled up this singular crevice, which is a fault rift."

He looked triumphant; Goritz seized the suggestion.

"That's right," he shouted, "up the glacier and then—we can use the dogs!"

We were soon back to the abandoned sledge; some of the dogs had followed us, the rest were sleeping off their debauch of raw bear's meat. We loaded the sledge with meat, from one of our caches, leaving the other intact, and with awakened hope started at a lively pace over the snow covered uplands for the distant ice-river. The going was not good for the snow had drifted somewhat, and was soft and mushy, but the dogs were in excellent condition, and they really seemed to understand that they had escaped desertion.

In three hours the glacier was reached. It was

KROCKER LAND RIM

a more significant feature than we had supposed. Where it emerged from the mountain hollow it was almost obliterated from view by an immense morainal accumulation which had choked up the river, as the Professor guessed, forming a small lake, fed also, we discovered, by the underground waters flowing from the glacier itself. Over this moraine we made our way in a helter skelter manner because of its unevenness, the scattered rocks bulging up and intercepting our path with a perverse frequency that drove Hopkins to improvisation:

"If I had a little dynamite
To put these pebbles out of sight,
I think I'd skip from pure delight
And say my prayers with all my might
As well I know is surely right.
But as it is they make me cuss
And put my temper in a fuss,
So if perdition is my share,
I owe it to this rocky lair."

There was plenty of snow in places where the sun had as yet failed to evict it, but everywhere melting and warmth were encountered. The summer was reigning, and the verdurous garb of green and colored things was drawn like a veil over the rugged grounds, soothing them into a transient loveliness. We could see the rivulets from the snowbanks coursing everywhere, and could hear from the glacier the gurgle, rush, and tinkle too of hidden rivers, while towards the coast, in the daytime, the sun revealed a shield of wide spread waters where the floods from the melting ice poured over the shore, and cut long, wide lanes in the rapidly vanishing shore ice.

When we had struggled to the glacier wall we found it an almost imperceptible rise to its surface, and once there, our faces turned toward the ice-

river to gauge its character. It was badly crevassed, and although the snow sheeting it over had been heavy, much had disappeared. Along the sides where the lateral moraine somewhat shielded it the snow still remained, but the depressions traversing it, sometimes in herringbone fashion, showed the position of the masked depths, in whose icy jaws our whole party, sledge and dogs might readily be entombed.

Goritz went first with the dog leader, then came myself at the head of the team, with Hopkins and the Professor on either side of the forebraces of the sledge. We were roped together, and the sledge—the only survivor of its kind from the storm—was heavily loaded. We each carried about twenty pounds of condensed food, ingeniously harnessed on our backs. It was an inconsiderable load and might prove serviceable if the sledge vanished.

At first we advanced gingerly, bridging crevasse after crevasse, but our confidence increased as the snow flooring, although yielding, repeatedly proved itself adequate for our support. At one point the sledge smashed the weakened crust and threatened to drag the dogs backward with it, as it hung almost vertically into a wide slit, forty or fifty feet deep, wherein the ice, to our eyes, was an aquamarine mass of jewels. Hopkins lashed the dogs and they hauled the sledge back again on the snow.

We had reached a turn in the glacier's track, and a patch of outrageous confusion. The whole surface seemed shattered, and serac-like monuments, poised all over, threatened us. We were constantly startled by crashes, and we moved with alarmed caution, for not only were the holes deep but they opened into sluiceways of hurrying water quite capable of sucking any unwary intruder into subterranean tunnels of ice. The dull plangor of the beating currents arose to us with an ominous

warning. The dogs here became nervous and unmanageable. Again and again we bridged the chasms with the sledge, and crept one by one over the improvised crossings, coaxing the dogs to follow. We now did not have the protection of the friendly banks. Goritz had concluded to ascend the mountainous ridge before us on the opposite side of the glacier, where the glacier itself, like a small "*jokull*" terminated, or began, in a neve loaded cirque.

To do this we were compelled to cross the glacier. After a good deal of dangerous work, with one or two nearly fatal mishaps, we attained the central dome of the ice and found here an ideally fashioned space for resting and feeding. The dogs were restless or sullen from hunger, and we needed the encouragement of food ourselves. The worst limb of our trip remained.

But it was a beautiful picture on every side. The day was clear and warm, and, as we gazed far below at the ice flecked ocean over the glacier's marge, or upward into the rugged bowl, walled with bold precipices, streaked ever and anon with spouting waterfalls, or higher still to those mute, imperishable peaks, guarding the secrets of the wonder-land towards which we were slowly, so slowly, moving, or lastly at the nearer edges of land on either side, the constricted throat of the glacier serpent, bountifully sprinkled with a vermeil of audacious blossoms and tender grass, we felt the thrill of our strange adventure keenly, and rejoiced in it. But a few minutes later our spirits were harshly dashed, and despair almost broke our hearts.

It was about two in the afternoon; everything was repacked and we had resumed our snail-like progress. The path, if it had been marked by a line, would have been revealed as a maze of loops,

necessitating countermarches and criss-crossings, but its widest indirection, after hours of work, showed that we were nearing our goal. The flowers on the cliff beyond us were now almost individually visible. They seemed like a lure to invite us to hasten to their side, when a jolt and tug, that nearly knocked my legs from under me, and then a recoil that sent me sprawling among the dogs.

The rope had parted; I saw its end fly upward, even as I saw the tall form of Goritz with tossing arms sink from sight. My God! Goritz had fallen into a crevasse and—how the thought lacerated me!—they were deepest, widest, on this side! Hopkins and the Professor knew it almost as quickly as myself. We recovered ourselves, and ran forward. Lying flat, on the rim of what had been a snow bridged crevasse, and held in position by the other two, I leaned out. Never shall I forget the horror of my feelings at that moment. Below me caught on an ice arm, which held him above the seething ice water, still deeper down on the floor of the gash, was Goritz, those splendid eyes imploringly lifted to mine:

"Quick, Alfred—the rope!" I tore the rope from around me, noosed it, shouting all the time in a sort of delirium I think, "Hold on Antoine, you're safe! Hold on! On! On!" And then, with a glance at Hopkins and the Professor, whose faces were almost whiter than the snow at our feet, was on my stomach again, the rope in my hand, and the noose lowered carefully to my friend. He lay on his side on a shelf of ice; a movement and he would slip into the tide below him. It was a critical moment, and yet only with the utmost precautionary slowness and delicacy of adjustment could the rescue be effected. Goritz knew that, though it seemed incongruous to watch a man, prostrate, literally on

the brink of destruction, approach the measures of salvation with the deliberation with which one might crack the shell of his breakfast egg. Slowly—the seconds seemed ages—he drew the loop to himself, caught one arm in it, thrust his head through it, and was endeavoring to extricate his other arm from its chancery beneath him, to engage it too in the friendly loop, when—I heard the snap—the shelf broke away! I slammed backward, called to the others to pull, jabbed my spiked shoes into the ice, and held on. Goritz's voice came thickly from his imprisonment:

"Haul, Alfred!"

And haul it was; the weight seemed trebled. I knew—the water was hauling too, but, before Goritz went, it might, for all I cared, drag me to the same doom. I guess Hopkins and the Professor felt that way, too. It seemed nip and tuck. Were we all to be pulled into the frigid maelstrom, to be finally ejected into the Arctic sea in the rush of the sub-glacial river? Somehow thinking this way put steel into our muscles and defiance in my heart, and—we pulled Antoine Goritz back to life at least, and his reception on the top of that glacier was as fervent, if a little less boisterous and showy, as if he had been met by the king in an audience room at Copenhagen. He was drenched and cold, had a wrenched shoulder but I took his place ahead now, and he dried off with exercise, after the fashion of Arctic navigators. And a bowl of tea that the Professor bewitched with a little of our last bottle of whisky helped matters.

We had left the glacier; that icy track was far below us, and distance contracting and closing all its wicked seams revealed it as a blazing white ribbon, negligently thrown over the shoulders of the still, black rocks. It looked well. The aneroid registered 6000 feet. The snow was awful

in spots, and we rolled into holes unsuspectedly saturated with water. Our snowshoes were indispensable, but the dogs were almost useless, floundering and helpless in the drifts. Our dog meat was rapidly diminishing, and, if the cruel dilemma must come, rather than to exhaust our supplies on them we would be compelled to kill them.

We were pushing along what bore the appearance of a *col* or pass between two majestic peaks, wrapped in ermine to their highest points, ermine that in the day glittered magnificently, rayed and starred with innumerable irises, and that in the lesser illumination of the night was immobile and dead, a monstrous winding sheet over a dead world.

A terrifying snow storm held us up for two days. The air was so dense with the falling crystals that we felt encased. It was a singular sensation. The Professor, who had been incubating some ideas(we always looked forward with expectancy to his first utterance after a spell of prolonged silence), launched the amazing paradox, during this storm, and while we, in the most detached manner awaited its conclusion in our snug tent, that we were approaching a warmer, snowless, and rainy zone. It was Hopkins who first recovered his powers of utterance after this promulgation.

"Professor, as a sedative to the distracted mind, you've got everything else winded. And for novelty, well, Barnum and Bailey's best advertiser couldn't begin to get the collocation of superlatives necessary to give a hint of your surprising guesses."

"It is not difficult to understand," resumed the Professor urbanely, with that calm manner of shelving the unconventional Yankee which always enraptured Hopkins; "the wind has been westerly, the excessive precipitation shows it was a moist wind, a wind heavily laden with suspended water, that moisture was dropped out as snow *here*, but

west of us it must have escaped expulsion. Why? Because it was not cold enough to condense it as snow. I think, though, it fell *as rain*. We shall see."

"And," he added a moment later, "on my theory of a polar depression that would be so."

We went to sleep on that, and the depth of our slumbers had some complimentary significance for the Professor's prediction.

After the storm, the sky failed to clear, and a wind sprang up from the north that rapidly increased in violence, hurling the snow in torrents, blinding, cutting us and foundering the wretched dogs, who lay down in their tracks repeatedly, or snarled up together in vicious fights. But Goritz was inexorable. He insisted on pushing ahead. His reason was just. We were now near the turning point; we had surmounted KROCKER LAND RIM. Should we go on or turn back? If it was to be back we had many things to think of, and not much time to waste, with our larder growing smaller each day and the prospect of half-rations ahead. Goritz had a tender heart and I know he wanted to get the dogs back, too.

Luckily the snow furnished better going, the wind ceased, our hearts leaped again, and the stern solemnity of that alpine land strangely elated us. At night now, the sun almost sank below the horizon, but its decline was the signal for the noiseless evocation of half lights and shadows, spectral tints, pale ghosts of mist curling over the endless desert of snow, a retinue of chiaroscuros that glided hither, thither, never quiet, yet never restless. And far south we thought we saw the crystal light of half eclipsed auroras. It all entranced me. I often stole outside our tent to watch the voiceless drama of the night, and often Goritz stood beside me. And now—poor fellow—"

(The speaker paused in his story, a sob choked his voice; then it was over and he continued.)

The Professor was right; the snowdrifts thinned away to bare ground. It was warmer, at first some ten degrees, then more, and the land descended. Had not Goritz lost? Should we not, according to the protocol of our agreement, search the new land? Goritz was unconvinced and inclined to temporize. Yes, the land was lower, perhaps; it was warmer, but how did we know it would keep so; a small decline here might change into an ascent further away; we were on a tableland, but another axis of elevation might arise from it, and remember in these solitudes there was not much life, no game, and our stores would in ten days be exhausted, not counting the dogs, some of whom must now be sacrificed for the others.

This had the appearance of tergiversation. The Professor was vehement, I and Hopkins leaned in his favor, but I think all of us would have succumbed to Goritz's wish and certainly to his command—the sweetest, bravest, most generous soul I have ever known! At length, at Hopkins' suggestion, we compromised again on a reconnaissance.

It was a pivotal point. We were in a sandy plain, with much bare rock, and soily places now greenish with moss or lichen. The surprising feature was the sudden onsets of rain with the east winds. It was rather misty all the time, and the fogs made it abysmally cheerless. It was easy to see that this excessive moisture formed the fathomless snows among the mountains we had ploughed over.

On the day of the reconnaissance we all separated. Goritz went north, the Professor, pertinacious in his convictions, went due west, with the aneroid, Hopkins and myself southward. Our reports were to be made at the conference at night. We reas-

sembled, all except Goritz turning up at the tent at almost the same time. Hopkins said that for stone breaking, the country he had walked over was the most promising he had ever encountered. He couldn't imagine a better place for a penal establishment. A reservation like it alongside of New York City would raise the moral standard of that city almost as high as anyone would like to go. He thought perhaps we'd better turn back.

The Professor disheartedly admitted that the land after sinking rose abruptly, and that there might be another *axis of elevation*—the Professor pronounced the technical observation with evident disgust. The fogs grew so dense it was impossible to determine. He concluded dolefully that, as much had been accomplished, it might be well for self preservation to return.

I corroborated Hopkins, and also suggested a return. We had been talking informally, sharing our observations, but their detailed presentation awaited Goritz's presence. And where was he? We had been back an hour, and our hunger remonstrated bitterly against his tardiness. Still another hour passed, and nature refused to tolerate a further deference to custom or respect. We ate our evening rations—already they were being shortened—concluding to go out on a search for Goritz, if he did not soon come in. Another hour hurried by, and yet no Goritz. We began to be alarmed, and yet that seemed absurd. What harm could come to a man in that flat land? And to a man of Goritz's strength and resources? Hardly had we thus reassured ourselves when the tent flap was pushed aside, and there stood Antoine Goritz, with one hand behind his back.

His melodious voice was raised, his eyes shone, his frame seemed expanded with excitement, his

face was flushed, and the disengaged hand opened and shut convulsively.

"Gentlemen," he said, "*we shall go on. Krocker Land is inhabited*, and—it is a LAND OF GOLD!"

He paused, stepped forward, and laid on our soap-box table a broad belt of gold plates, engraved, and united by a gold buckle, beautifully embossed.

CHAPTER V

The Perpetual Nimbus

You probably might recall, Mr. Link, that wonderful chapter in "Robinson Crusoe," where Defoe describes the feelings of his hero after he found the footprints in the sand. I mention it here because I am amused at the memory of how different were our emotions as Goritz showed us the gold belt. I turned last night to the pages of Defoe's masterpiece and jotted down this appropriate quotation; it illustrates completely what I mean.

> "I slept none that night: the farther I was from the occasion of my fright, the greater my apprehensions were: which is something contrary to the nature of such things, and especially to the usual practice of all creatures in fear: but I was so embarrassed with my own frightful ideas of the thing, that I formed nothing but dismal imaginations to myself, even though I was not a great way off from it. Sometimes I fancied it must be the Devil, and reason joined in with me upon this supposition; for how should any other thing in human shape come into the place?"

That gold belt to us we knew meant human occupation of this New Continent, and it was almost impossible for us to control our violent joy over the discovery. We were not worrying as to whether it was the Devil or savages, and we felt sure we were not the victims of illusion. Perhaps a little trepidation crept in later, but for that moment we were beside ourselves with happiness and wonder. And yet we were at first silent, dumbfounded, bending

over the strange find in dazed delight, eager yet incredulous, lost in a bewilderment of anticipation.

The Professor had produced a small pocket glass and was nervously inspecting the plates, very much to our annoyance, his ears and head seeming constantly to be pushing our faces away. A look of profound vindication appeared on his features, and I think we sympathized with his feelings and applauded them. Goritz beamed benignantly, and I knew Hopkins was on the verge of a metrical quotation. But the Professor had the floor.

"Gentlemen," he began, "this belt has no possible relation to any know human culture. The fabricators of this *chef d'oeuvre*—it's such in every sense—have probably never existed outside of the eccentric depression—the size of a small continent—into which we shall be privileged to descend." The Professor bowed to Goritz, who was radiant from his approbation.

He continued: "The figures engraved on these plates, the relievos on this buckle, are autochthonous"—Hopkins emitted a low whistle. "They are, however, distinctly colubrine, reptilian, crotaline, lacertilian, poly-catabolic-arbori-animalistic. They indicate a serpent worship and a tree worship, and are reminiscent of the Fall; I may call it the recapitulative survival of myth."

Hopkins' whistle had been attempting some shriller ejaculations of surprise, but the verbal avalanche smothered it. It was a suffocating moment for all of us, and when Hopkins said, "Professor, with a cocktail on top of this I believe our cerebral intoxication would be complete," the interior danger of explosion increased almost beyond control. But the Professor kept on, and a little "plain stuff," as Hopkins called it helped us out of our embarrassment.

"An animal like a crocodile or an alligator, in a

peculiar stage of evolution, approaching that of a serpent, is depicted here," his finger touched the buckle, "and everywhere else are variations of one theme, the Serpent and the Tree. The people of this *Navel of the World* retain the traditions of our religion."

After that we all became intensely interested in the belt or girdle, but we withheld our comments. Our pretense was sincere enough. We were interested, so interested that it would have been impossible for any of us—the Professor alone was capable of such sublime detachment—to have slept a wink if we had tried to, but then our interest, in which mingled the elixir of a fabulous Hope, succeeding days and weeks of danger and uncertainty, was satisfied at a lower stage of realization. With us it was MEN and GOLD, and, scintillating back of these noble facts, was the speechless marveling of the world of letters, of science, at our recital, if ever we got back to those things.

I asked Goritz all about it when we were together outside of the tent. It seems he had walked about three miles from the camp, and was watching a flurry of wind tear up the water of a little pool, literally boring it all out in spray, when, as the action was accomplished, he saw the glint of the gold. Another look and the belt was in his hand. He sat down to catch his breath, and to quiet the beating of his heart, and then when he had recovered his composure, he had gone on, believing that other trinkets might turn up, or that he might encounter its makers, or anything in fact that might explain the treasure trove—but the search had been unavailing.

"Well," I said as he finished, "what do you think? The Professor has some wild notions about it, but it looks to me as if the Professor has all along sailed pretty close to the wind."

"Yes, Alfred," he answered, "there's a kernel of truth in his talk. Of course I always thought so or I wouldn't have come at all— And Alfred," his splendid eyes searched my own in that great way he had, "I have had curious premonitions just now, as I walked back to the camp. We are coming upon incomprehensible things. We must go on, though we may cross starvation before we reach food, and—the *marvels beyond.* The rations I know are low, and I know too we've a bad way ahead—*Mais, esperons.*"

I would have said more but before us stood Hopkins. He was actually smoking—"to keep from going bug-house," he explained, and then he muttered:

> "Send me to the Arctic regions, or illimitable azure.
> On a scientific goosechase, with my Coxwell or my Glaisher."

Camp was broken up the next morning. We were wild to get away. Before we started the dogs were fed the last of the bear meat, and we were all put on half rations; the demands on our strength for the work immediately before us would not be great.

I also got a chance to see the belt better. It was very short and made up of plates hooked together with a larger buckle. There was absolutely no metal but gold in it. The buckle was decorated with an impossible serpentine monster with legs and a snout-bearing head, indeed a thing very well described by the Professor as a cross or mixture of a huge snake and an alligator, and the plates were engraved with hieratic markings that looked like poles encircled by spiral lines.

"So," I said to myself, "these are the reminiscent Tree and the Serpent."

"Look to me like bean poles," remarked Hopkins, who was looking over my shoulder.

On we went west. It seemed as if the abominable rocks and sand would never come to an end, the former sharp and knife-like, cutting our shoes, the latter whirling in blinding sheets against our faces, in spite of the almost constant fog, and even the occasional rain. The sledge was lightened and moved as carefully as possible, but the obstacles could not be avoided in the mist, and before the day was half over it was a wreck, so that its load had to be distributed among us. There was made at once a concentration of everything indispensable, and the rest was abandoned. Our heavy packs did not help our progress. The wind kept westerly. It was strong. We were astonished at the absence of snow and at the moderate temperature. The thermometer denoted 0° and 2°, Centigrade. These conditions seemed to bear out the Professor's claims, and the altitude was decreasing too. Then came a desperately stony hollow, and the land rose steadily until we were even higher than we had been at the start. But there were no mountains about us, just a broad back of sloping rock, "a gigantic, intrusive, basaltic dike," said the Professor, between gasps, as fog smote us with almost the solidity of water.

We had made thirty miles, and nature and the day were united in protest against a longer drive. A yelp ahead, a shout from Goritz to "fall back," showed some danger line in our vicinity. We had not stopped one instant too soon. One of the dogs had plunged over a precipice, and we were then standing on its crumbling edge. By one of those sudden changes in nature which call to mind a *divertissement* in a scenic theatrical display, the fogbanks now drifted off and in the light of the low western sun we looked out over a strange land.

The barren and roughened ridge at last ended in this inner line of the Krocker Land Rim. It abruptly, like a palisade escarpment, fell off into declivities or occasional slopes made up of the talus of its decomposition or dilapidation. We gazed now on a singular barrenness of steeply slanting land, ribbed with asperities like hogs' backs, of parallel hills. Over this land, in the channels that they had made for themselves, some entrenched in precipitous valleys, rushed streams fed by that continual precipitation which toward the sea became snow, and inland away from a colder atmosphere fell in torrents of rain.

The scene was indescribable, not by reason of variety but of monotony of detail, and because beyond it, far along a horizon that may have been fifty or more miles distant the most perplexing vaporous effects prevailed. What it might be it was impossible to determine. There were constant motions there, motions explosive and gradual, for we could almost be sure that the cloudy masses were processioning now measuredly in huge volume and then disordered by internal rupture. We thought we caught the flashes of electric storms.

The scene below us was most repellent. The vicissitudes of cold and storm had ejected all semblance of charm from those black, denuded rocks. Their asperities, which were pinnacles hundreds of feet high, were united by valleys bare to the eye, from our point of view, of all vegetation, the whole combination slanting inward, and composing a broad, melanic sterility perhaps only paralleled on the lifeless and crater-pitted plains of the moon. The violent tossing streams, many of them hidden in defiles of erosion, alone imparted the sense of animation, and even this animation seemed ruthless and destructive. It was utterly sullen, and when it was not sullen, it was savage and threatening. It

was all so overwhelming that we simply stared at it, voiceless and despairing.

Hopkins broke the spell of our dismay: "Well, Professor, this certainly is not Paradise, but I'm willing to believe that it's the shell, the outside of it, and a pretty hard kind of a nut it makes. *Can we crack it?*"

That indeed was the question we all silently asked. Where would this wilderness of rocks and waters lead us? Could we expect to find game or any sort of food in this tableland of sheer, stark, desolation? Our supplies were daily shrinking, and we had been a little wasteful too, deluded by the false hope of soon securing succor. It was a long way back to the cache on the tableland, and a longer one to the anchored launch on the sands of the coast, but how far was it ahead of us to life? At least behind there were bears and musk oxen, and seal and duck; did anything replace them before us? It made us pause; the risk of going on was considerable.

Our council convened under rather straightened circumstances of confidence and hope. The dogs would be of no use in the marches before us, unless indeed we threw them into the larder, and their upkeep was an equivocal handicap, which might more than offset their value as an aid to the commissariat. Goritz said we had forty pounds of provisions, about a pound a day for each man for ten days; and there were the guns and ammunition to be carried too, the instruments and the stoves and oil. The tent outfit could be left behind; at a pinch we might battle through without it. Battle, though, to WHAT? Ah! That was the question. Were we in a dead land? Was the gold belt a prehistoric relic, having no relation to any living race, a token of past occupancy by a people who had fled from the fast contracting opportunities of life in this

Arctic inferno? It was a good illustration of the caprice of human feelings, our total rejection of the considerations that a few days before had made us jubilant, boastful, careless; so quickly does the average man reflect the color of his surroundings.

Our position was dismal indeed. The inexplicable fogs settled around us, or, if the west wind blew—and only for that brief interval when we caught sight of the bewildering landscape below us, had it ceased to blow—drifted over us in endless cloud-like masses. A precipice was before us, how many more were beyond that? And then the return. The longer we thought over it, and turned the angles of possibility to inspection the more hopeless the prospect grew. But again the Gold Belt? A shining lure of the Demon of Death to tempt us to a horrible doom. As Goritz ostentatiously showed it to us it became loathsome, sinister, a delusive snare!

And this led to our great surprise. Goritz wished to go on. He said so. This quiet, reserved, strong man handed back to the Professor his predictions, subscribed to with his own enthusiastic acceptance, and the Professor, pirouette-fashion, had wheeled around in a rather dogged scepticism. I think Hopkins and myself, out of pure dread, favored the return. Goritz had always resisted the quest. The gold bauble was "getting in its fatal work," whispered Hopkins.

Goritz put it this way: We couldn't get back. The return trip would be far harder than to progress in our present course. We had no sledge. Everything pointed to success if we could keep on. The land beyond us indicated a great depression, the fogs rolling over us showed an approaching warmer area; the glimpse that had been permitted us was conclusive; once beyond that cloud zone and the realities, the living realities, would begin. This

gold belt (he held up the glittering charm that had turned his head) was no relic, its engraving was too fresh, its outlines too sharp; it had been brought where he had found it, it must have come from the west, and the way, practicable for its former wearers, was practicable for us.

"How about a balloon, an aeroplane, anything that flies?" suggested Hopkins. Antoine Goritz became scornful, his French blood often came to the surface. He looked straight at Hopkins, and a frown clouded his face; it did not become him.

"Parbleu vous etes fou, mon frere, que Je crois,
Avec de tels discours vous moquez vous de moi?"

Hopkins didn't wince; it wasn't his fashion.

"Well, Goritz, I'm game for the deal. You can't put it over me with your *parlez-vous*. But listen, we'll never agree on this stake. It's up to the little Goddess on the Wheel. What do you say?" He tossed something in the air and shouted:

"Fair or Foul?"

"Fair," called Goritz.

The shining object rattled among the stones; it had a silvery lustre, and as the Yankee stooped and picked it up, there was something strangely grave in his face.

"You win, Goritz," he calmly said, as he pocketed the trinket, "and I'll follow you till the curtain drops."

He rose and extended his hand; it was grasped cordially by the big Dane, the two men facing each other at almost the same level, both beautiful types of manhood.

"Mr. Link, the object that Spruce Hopkins flung upwards, and cast as the die of our destiny that day is in my hand." (He laid a flat silver medal on the

table between us. I picked it up; on one side was a masterly execution of the face of a lovely woman; on the other was a sort of Satan.)

"Mr. Link," resumed Erickson, "that woman is Angelica Sigurda Tabasco, and that man Diaz Ilario Aguadiente, the two interesting occupants of No. — east Fifty-eighth Street, from whose unpleasant society you freed me. Hopkins gave me that the last time I saw him alive. What he told me then had something to do with the predicament you found me in."

(Mr. Erickson again retired into his obviously gloomy thoughts, which I did not attempt to disturb, and, on his emergence, continued his story.)

This impromptu solution won the day, and we prepared for the unknown transit over that unknown territory of which we had had one fleeting glimpse, and which lay somewhere before us, in a vast milkness of mist.

We concluded to take with us two dogs; the rest—now three, one had gone mad (*piblocto*) and had been shot—were killed, and a cannibalistic feast offered to the survivors. The oil and stoves were left behind; there might be enough fibre or wood for fire, at least we hoped so. Our packs were made as light as possible We were in a race, like Mikkelsen's last lap, *a Race against Hunger*. The sleeping-bags were discarded, the tent we carried a short distance only. No grimmer or braver determination ever animated explorers; we were not running for safety, we were running *away* from it. The step taken, our spirits rose, the former fancies swarmed upon us, and perhaps the gold belt again floated before our vision, an omen and a guide. This imaginative sway of anticipation was needed, or else we could never have plucked up courage to make the fateful start.

The beginning was symptomatic enough of our

coming dangers. To get over and down the precipice on whose edge we stood was impossible without a clearance of the besetting fogs, and fortunately, as if by invitation for us to retain our resolution, the fog lifted on the morning we started. We were on the brink of a high columnar black wall, rising from 200 feet or less to 600 feet or more, from the rocky floor of the country beyond. We searched for some pathway for descent. Innumerable shelves and footholds diversified the precipitous faces but they were far apart, and often offered little more than space for a bird or a goat. Once down the first vertical cliffs the gigantic heaps of talus leaning against their bases would afford us a practicable though rough way to the bottom. And now we saw with astonishment the obvious inclination of the farther land. It seemed an almost unbroken hillside, coursed by streams and stream beds, furrowed by dry, stony valleys, cut by the low, serrated backs of steep hills, the whole landscape terminating in that distant medley of rolling clouds, streaming vapor banks barely discernible, except as, so it seemed, they were lit by flashes of light. Were we on the outer flanks of a continental lava bed, and was that cloud space beyond the lip of a vast volcanic confusion? The question was not asked aloud, but its staggering terror made us tremble. Never, Mr. Link, did men more heroically walk into the shadows of the Valley of Death than did we.

The morning sun sent long shadows westward; the day was actually warm; a sudden brightness encouraged us. If the food lasted! That was the terror that haunted us. Could it? At last Goritz discovered far northward a gorge or ravine reaching almost to the top of the palisade. Down this we scrambled and found ourselves in the bed of a low stream, which a day later became a swollen torrent,

so quickly did precipitation feed the rivers, and so enormous was its volume. This made our daily progress more dangerous. We were soaked and miserable ourselves, but the protection to our food was imperfect, and that gave rise to serious doubts as to whether it would last us ten days, the calculated limit before its exhaustion. The biscuit half turned to dough and the drenched tea exuded in tawny drops from our packs. This led to a readjustment and each man carried his rations of tea and biscuit and chocolate underneath his coat. The pemmican, force meat, cabbage and beans are safe enough on our backs.

It soon became necessary to desert the watery defile which we had first entered; it became more and more confined, the banks were literally stone heaps, and after one or two perilous slips which might have accelerated our progress by dumping us into the chasing flood we painfully climbed out over a high rocky ridge on the summit of which our sight was cheered to find low, herbaceous growths. Here we managed to extort a niggardly flame which was assisted by oil Goritz alone had had the prudence to add to his load, and our evening meal was eaten in some gratitude.

The rains, distressing as they were at intervals, when the downpour became most vehement, were on the whole preferable to the fogs. They cleared the air, and we could see our way, calculate interruptions and avoid disaster. As we went on the vegetation increased in quantity, and often smiling —they seemed smiling to our tired eyes although lit by no sunlight—patches around us in sheltered corners afforded welcome though damp camping grounds. Our clothes were torn by frequent falls, and our shoes are turning into tangled shreds. The Professor had sprained his wrist badly—he narrowly escaped rolling down an embankment which

might have put him out of the running altogether—and Goritz is in pain. I know it by his limping gait, and the twitches of suffering that cross his face. Something is the matter with me too, fatigue and the insufficient or canned food is telling on me. My muscles are stiff and aching, the joints of my limbs red and swollen, and dark blue spots were showing on my skin. Is it scurvy?

It is the sixth day, and we believe we have made seventy miles. The cloud zone is approaching; our prospect every day grows more extraordinary, more terrifying; we encamp behind a shoulder of rock, on a low upland which separated two roaring rivers. The rain had stopped and a colder atmosphere reveals the scene. The temperature is just above 2° Centigrade, the aneroid shows we had fallen two thousand feet since we had left the Krocker Land Rim. We are immobile, in a sort of stupor, yet fascinated by the spectacle. Hopkins alone remains cheerful and garrulous.

"Professor," he chatters, "the Rocky Road to Dublin had nothing on this boulevard. The gentleman who, by reason of a congenital failing, which was assisted by circumstances outside of his control, complained of the narrowness rather than the length of the street would be inclined to make some severe reflections on this thoroughfare also. But we can be pretty sure the transformation takes place the other side of the proscenium-show yonder."

Poor Spruce Hopkins, he kept up his joviality for our benefit, but we didn't care much and I don't think he did. We were starving; it was half a pound now a day. But Goritz never wavered a hair, he urged us on, he promised food, rest, recreation even, if we would persevere through the cloud curtain.

And now we were under it, cowering in dread before the awfulness and magnitude of it. It rose in towering gushes of stream, belched forth from a huge crack in the crust of the earth in which poured the full rivers that had accompanied our march. Those rivers entered recesses of the heated earth, and were returned in steam with detonations and earthquakes, so that

> *The frame and huge foundation of the earth*
> *Shak'd like a coward.*

Reviewing it now, as it was revealed to us later upon examination and study, the physiography of the stupendous phenomenon we had reached was this. Some strain had cracked the crust of the earth in a long arcuate rift; it suggested the crevice and it was irregular in the same way, which is seen in the Almannaja in Iceland, but it was profoundly deep, and the area communicated with the igneous interior. The water that was continually condensed from the steam that poured upward from the huge fissure, as continually was returned, and, except for interruptions in the reciprocal exchange produced by meteorological conditions, such as cold, heat and varying winds, this curious equilibration was unbroken, had been for ages. The emergence of the steam was irregular, though it was always coming up at some points, and there was a synchrony between points. We discovered later that at very distant places from our position on the great circular break there was no steam. The rock beneath had become thoroughly cooled and congealed, or the inner fires were absent, and the water entering the chasm was lost within the crust, or else, deviously percolating laterally may have subsequently contributed its supply to the active steam geysers when it touched the heated surfaces which formed the sources of the latter's energy.

Therefore you may place this picture before your mind, of a steam wall projected from a raggedly edged, very broad earth rift, absorbed by the atmosphere, or condensed in clouds, and intermittently returned to the earth in rain or if transferred by westerly winds, falling outside of the Krocker Land Rim in snow.

The explosions that rent and shattered this steam veil, or shattered the cloud masses above us, were at first difficult to explain. It was after we had penetrated and crossed the abyss that the Professor suggested that they were due to a partial decomposition of some part—a very, very small part—of the steam into the gases hydrogen and carbonic oxide, where coal or carbonaceous deposits existed at rare or higher heats, and that these explosive mixtures, retained somehow in the steam, undiffused, were fired by electric-lightning sparks. This theory never seemed scientific to me. But the fact of such disturbances remained, and it was owing to the momentary glimpse a terrific shock of this kind permitted us across the void, that we picked up daring enough to make the attempt to cross the horrid gap.

We were within perhaps five hundred feet of the spouting cauldron, where rain was constantly falling, crawling over rocks wet and slippery, astonished and half delighted at the luxuriant development of moss on the lips of pools or saucers of water, and noting a great rise in temperature, with that peculiar buried tumult of hissing, issuing from the earth, when this happened. There was a flash, a roar, and, as if a gigantic hand had parted the dense curtain before us, our eyes crossed the gulf, and we saw a land of greenness and of light!

Stunned, half sick, hungry, with a gnawing wretchedness of desire, it almost seemed that we had been duped by some illusion born of our weak-

ness and the deceptive play of the illuminated mist. Huddled together in a niche of the rocks that were in places dissected by cracks, that also discharged tenuous lines of steam, we talked in whispers over the marvelous apparition. Yes, we had all seen it. There could be no mistake, but Goritz had seen more. Across the black, vomiting pit was a bridge of rock! It might have been some remaining partition, holding its place against disintegration, spared in some way for our salvation from the destructive agencies that had here ripped the crust asunder, or indeed it might have been built up from some later solidified eruption. *Had* he seen it?

Goritz was madly certain about that. Well, and if he had, could we use it? There are desperate stages in desperation that breed, Ajax-like, defiance of danger. The sudden realization of a world of beauty, a world of food, on the other side of the steaming pit, nerved our poor flagging bodies, and summoned an audacity of will to our minds! It was our last chance. Myths of the past in that delirious moment flocked back to my mind, which pictured guarded paradises, defended gardens of delight, treasures watched by dragons, elysiums hedged with terrors, and always, always courage won the prize, and passed the dangers. And yet there must be caution; the old refrain sounded in my ears, *Be not too bold!*

Goritz and Hopkins, the least impaired, reconnoitered the pass. They moved down some stepped ledges and were lost to sight. In an hour or so they returned. Their faces were lighted with hopefulness. They both believed the path was negotiable, and they both agreed that there were periodic cessations of the fiercer ebullitions from below. It was also discovered that we could not make our way to the right or left for any considerable distance. We had trailed our way to an isthmus of land,

enclosed by two impassable streams, shooting in rugged wild channels. To think of crossing them was sheer madness. Goritz and Hopkins had actually advanced a little way on the bridge, straining their eyes to catch some further intimations of the delectable country we now believed would be attained were we once over this inscrutable fissure. The daylight, when the sun was highest and easterly, was now short, and in the mist-encumbered land, in the cloud-swept skies, that light was almost eclipsed. Everything contributed to our uncertainty and danger.

We made ready for the start. We consumed every scrap of food, divested ourselves of unnecessary outer clothing, which had already become insufferably warm —*kamiks*, *nanookis*, *kooletah*— packed our ammunition on our breasts, reversed and strapped our guns on our backs (the Professor added to his burden a pot and a fryingpan), tucked away our matches, chewed the last tea leaves our cannister afforded, and with a few chocolate cakes in our pockets went down the steps,

"* * * *with a heart for any fate.*"

I was indeed sick; exertion pained me, and a nauseating weariness threatened at moments to rob me of consciousness. The two poor dogs which had escaped the extremity of our needs, less through mercy than through revulsion, were turned loose. Yet as we went down the ledges to the brink, I saw them chasing us. Goritz roped us together again, gave a few orders as to signals, and ordered the descent.

We went *a tatons*, literally on all fours; Goritz first, then the Professor, then myself, then Hopkins. As we drew near to the ominous edge, and felt our way over the first steps of the stony crossing it required all my strength of will to draw my legs

after my groping hands. At first it presented a tolerable pathway, flat, narrow, but sloping dangerously to either side, slippery from the constant rain that fell from the saturated air. We silently pushed on, Goritz by agreement stopping every thirty counts (seconds), and resting five. Gradually the path contracted and, in about thirty feet, became a sharp backbone over whose sides our legs dangled in the constantly steaming vault. It was warm and almost stifling at intervals and then came relief in the shape of whirling gusts of wind, which however were disconcerting, and made our precarious balance still more uncertain.

We had probably proceeded fifty feet in all, when a blackness shot through with red darts came before my eyes; I reeled slightly and dropped forward, instinctively clutching the wet rock and jerking the rope that bound me to the Professor. The Professor in turn pulled on Goritz, and our thin line halted. It was arduous work for the Professor, whose wrist was still aching.

A detonation thundered far away below us. The spasm passed; I pulled the rope, the Professor passed the signal, and we resumed our insect-like progress. Singular that, as I moved again, the thought of Dante and Virgil crossing the bridge over the tenth circle, as illustrated by Dore, rose distinctly, clear, indubitable, in front of me. It even seemed possible for me to define the pagination of the leaf I actually saw. This strange resuscitated impression kept me conscious.

On, on; the arete remained unchanged; our progress was encouraging; I seemed cognizant of a deeper gloom; it was the opposite wall. We had reached it. Alas! It rose above our heads and *must* be scaled! Goritz pulled the rope, the signal ran through the file and we halted again. The path broadened now, as at its eastern end, and our

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legs were relieved from the irksome straddle they had been subjected to. It was a welcome pause to me. I knew that the last scrap of effort I was capable of was needed now, if some vertical wet wall was to be surmounted in that almost impenetrable blackness.

In about fifteen minutes the tug came again, and we knew Goritz had solved some problem of the ascent confronting us. I heard him calling back, and the Professor answering. Then I found myself in this situation; on a fairly wide platform against a broken wall and up it I heard the scratching exertion of the Professor as he seemed to be bodily pulled up the ragged face. The constantly falling rain had ceased. But as the Professor rose, I felt he was no longer attached to me. I drew in the rope before me and came to its loose end. We were separated! Aghast, I was unable to speak, but my outstretched arms encountered Hopkins.

"Hopkins, Hopkins," I hoarsely whispered, "the rope has parted. We are alone!"

"Don't worry," replied that extraordinary man, "we couldn't be lonelier than we have been. This solitude is the most unbroken bit of isolation I ever walked into. Of course we're separated. This interesting masonry we've struck isn't very well constructed. It isn't plumb. It hangs out a *leetle* above. Goritz found it out, uncoiled himself, got to the top, told the Professor to drop you and me, and is now engaged in hoisting that scientific encyclopedia up to bliss and safety. We won't stay dropped long. We're to go the same way, and really, admirably adapted for concealment of an escaped felon as is this retreat, honest men could afford to dispense with its protection."

I sometimes thought that when Hopkins talked this way on the verge of destruction he was a little demented from fear. Perhaps I wronged him.

"But say, Erickson, you're not well, old fellow."

I had fallen against him; another surge of giddiness and harsh pains lacerating my joints had overcome me. Then I was struck by a rope end; it had descended from above. Understanding it all now, and clutching at the hope of deliverance from the terrors around us, I roused myself.

I heard the voice of Goritz shouting, "Tie up." And then Hopkins replying, "All right! Alfred is a little out of sorts. He can't help you much. When I *say*, pull together."

Hopkins unloosed our connection, firmly fastened me to the rope and, indicating my upward course, telling me to "brace up," and that it was the last lap, pushed me up a declivity bristling with sharp projections. For the first time I saw a dim light filtering from above. I did not attempt to look upward. The pull came, and I scrambled weakly forward. Again the dark, red-riven cloud overwhelmed me, my limbs seemed disjointed; a picture of home, I thought, filled my eyes; a blow on my head, then a vast detachment as if I were falling through space succeeded, and I lost consciousness.

And when I awoke! Ah! Mr. Link I have since often believed that our first glimpse of heaven may be like the vision of loveliness that surrounded me when slowly my eyes took on their functions, and my head cleared, and rational observation again began. My pains, too, had for the instant subsided. I felt almost disembodied, as if indeed in some spiritual trance I had reached the other side of death.

I was lying in deep grass on a hillside, bathed in light; my friends around me—No, Hopkins was not there. I noted that. Backward the steaming wall of vapor was lit with a soft radiance, and resembled an ever-changing cloud land. Above, the sky was clear and blue; the distance was a revela-

tion of beauty, ponds and lakes separated by low hills, whose summits held coppices of trees and shrubs, sparkled and shone in far flung chains and groups, and below, in a softly radiant vale, the slim, long outline of a little lakelet, embosomed in tall, waving reeds or grasses, like some titanic jewel, gleamed, crystalline and keen.

Ducks were swimming on its surface, and skimming with beating wings its tiny waves. Herons or cranes were wading in the sedges on its shores, and a stirring and noisy aquatic bird life everywhere about it, made it vocal and animated. Far away a strange, soft light burned in the heaven, and for a moment it seemed as if another sun had replaced the diurnal traveler of the skies.

CHAPTER VI

The Crocodilo-Python

But nature reasserted its importunities, and hunger gnawed my vitals. In a chapter of Admiral Peary's book, "Over the Great Ice," is a thrilling episode which describes his own and Astrum's, hunger before they slew the musk ox near Independence Bay, Greenland, and the ferocity, almost, with which they feasted on the raw meat. I once thought that the story had been given a half threatrical exaggeration. Now I know it was truthful enough. My companions were also weak and prostrated. I now saw clearly their thin, pinched features, the natureless stare of their eyes, the flaccid, hopeless flutter of their hands. I had not realized how near we had been to dropping dead in our tracks.

There was a shot—another, then—another. "God be thanked," muttered Goritz, and the Professor mechanically rose to his unsteady feet, and shaded his eyes, looking down the hillside.

"He's coming, and his hands are full," at length he said, and sank to the ground.

It seemed an eternity before the tall figure of the Yankee brushed through the grass, and flung the dead bodies of three wild geese among us.

Few or none who have not known the extremity of hunger can understand how, as Mikkelsen expresses it, "one's whole consciousness becomes concen-

trated into one importunate demand for food—food —food." And do you remember, if you read it, how Mikkelsen and Iversen set up the tins of the cache at Schnauder's Island in a row, to feast their eyes on them, and then, after all, came that "feverish race with death—the grim death of hunger"?

Our state was not as desperate, but perhaps we were not such hardened and strong men. It was not long before a fire made of branches and twigs and grass was burning merrily, and though there was nothing but water to drink, and there were no condiments—no salt or pepper, no bread or biscuits, we devoured the fried duck with a rapture no words can properly do justice to. It was not enough. Hopkins must go again and again. But the larder furnished us in these new, hospitable surroundings was inexhaustible. We wondered whether the sound of a gunshot had ever been heard here; the birds were simply curious, not frightened, and only interrupted their play or avocation with a momentary and short flight.

We moved forward from our first resting place and encamped under the leafy covering of a beautiful, narrow, silver-leaved tree, that the Professor told us was a relative of that ornament of parks and pleasure grounds in Europe and America, the *Anastatica syriachum*. We called our camp *Restoration*. Hopkins suggested *Emptiness* as a name, for several reasons, because of our unappeasable appetites and because in it, besides ourselves, our guns, a few cooking vessels (to be exact, just a pot and a fryingpan) the rope we carried, and our few instruments, our ammunition and our matches, there were none of the appurtenances that are associated with the name of camp. But the name Restoration pleased us better, for here were we filled with a wonderful animation of expectancy,

here our strength had been fully restored, here we had become joyful beyond estimation, the Professor had resumed his alacrity of mind, and once more we all embarked on the sea of fabulous imagining. It was altogether wonderful. Where were we? What was the meaning of this temperate charm of climate? Whence came this broad illumination when the sun had set?

The first moments of our mere animal restoration passed, then a delicious weariness overcame us as we surrendered to the mirthful spirit of surprise and admiration, and to the curative properties of fried or boiled duck. Around us stretched a magnificent country, which bore the aspect of the sylvan loneliness of the lakeland of Minnesota and Wisconsin and Canada, though more undulating or hilly. The wall of steam and cloud behind us, occasionally glowing dully with the flame of its intermittent explosions, extended north and south, or was lost in the pearly exhalations of the distance.

It formed an inexhaustible source of rain, for, as the east winds prevailed, the mists swept over this aquitanian land in showers, or, if the west wind, it was rolled away in thunderous glory to deluge that steep, barren zone we had descended, from Krocker Land Rim, and, beyond the Rim, it fell again in snow. The Professor, boastful now, and Goritz calmly exultant, arranged the fortunes we were about to meet in pleasing colors. To listen to them as Hopkins and I lay on our backs in the fragrant grass, starred with white and blue blossoms, was like the recital of a fairy story, a legend of miracles and marvels.

The Professor took up the strain in this wise:

"Here is the most wonderful illustration of Perpetual Motion. The precipitation of the Arctic Sea falls on this land in rain, outside of it in snow. The rain flows down the rivers of the arid slope

under Krocker Land Rim, is emptied into the heated or inflamed bowels of the earth, uncovered by the huge meridional crevice, and returned as steam to be again thrown down, evaporated and reprecipitated in an endless chain of supreme magnitude.

"And, gentlemen, we have entered the polar depression of which you were so scornfully incredulous. We have already fallen two thousand feet below the mean level of the earth. This is a temperate region, with symptoms of subtropical or even perhaps tropical life I believe we shall discover a series of successive gigantic steps, each a recession within the crust of the earth, like continental amphitheatrical terraces, and at the Center—"

"What?" gurgled Hopkins.

"Ah! Mr. Hopkins, what indeed."

But before the Professor could frame his answer to the question, Goritz, whose reticence had now succumbed to the wonders of our experience had seized the thread of the lecture. He would outdo the Professor in prophecies, with a merry fling or soaring of imagination that made that cheerful scientist dubious or irritated. I think he rather resented this unexpected, half satirical participation in the monopoly of his professional vaticinations.

"I'll tell you what, Hopkins," would continue Goritz smilingly, with a musical intonation that accorded with the serenity of our surroundings, "it will be a City of Gold—houses of gold, golden chariots, golden furniture. We can break off the legs and arms of the chairs and tables, knock down the doors, rip up the flagging, and put up a stack of gold bric-a-brac that will keep us forever. We'll go back, bring in the engineers, bridge that gulf, and railroad the metropolis to the shore, ship the whole thing to America and then—(by this

time Hopkins would be pummeling me "*to sit up and take notice*") we'll come back, seize the mines and fetch the Millenium back to the world; no more poor, no begging, no charities, just universal peace and happiness!"

"May be," Hopkins would grunt as he knocked me flat again, and fell himself face forward to the ground, "may be, but Pujo and the Democratic Congress will catch you, if you don't watch out. Why my dear, unsophisticated friend, if you gave it away, and let people know you had a claim on the original, inexhaustible goldbrick of the Universe, the crowd up here would tilt the earth over, and set it rolling the wrong way. And then—WHAT?"

So we often joked and laughed together in the halcyon days that restored our strength and health. But the fit of mere whimsical jubilation soon came to an end. Our exploits were only begun, and already two serious wonders attracted our attention and brought us in contact with an amazing phenomenon. The first was the unbroken illumination, the measureless day! The sun itself hardly raised its red disk above the horizon now. We knew that the six months' night was fast approaching, outside of this enchanted bowl, and yet within its magic circle the light remained, and there were no alternations of day and night. A varying light indeed, as there were clear or cloudy skies, but still the sensible, broad day. What did this mean? What anomaly of natural philosophy, of physics, of astronomy, could be invoked to explain this aberration?

And the second was the Sleep of Vegetation. The trees went to sleep, the flowers too. The leaves of the trees turned upward, and clasped the twigs and branches, exposing their dull brown under surfaces only, and the sepals and petals of the flowers did the same. Shielded behind the

impervious dark film of the thickened integument, the green upper surfaces remained as it were closed; a voluntary recuperation that was novel enough. The Professor was enraptured, and he discovered that the breathing pores (*stomata*), usually in plants on the under side of the leaf, were here above, that too there was no prevalent custom, so to speak, among the plants, in their "going to sleep." One plant would be thus sleeping alongside of a wide-awake neighbor. But he did note a kind of periodicity, in opening and closing, as Pfeffer has done in plants kept constantly in the dark. And it seemed to all of us that the colors were both paler and deeper; deeper in the reds and purples, paler in the greens and yellows.

But that artificial sun that towards the west illumined the zenith, an endless fixed lamp set in the sky, immovable above the earth? What was that? Towards it we hastened, now almost free of loads, and free of cares, immersed in a reckless curiosity, feeling the wantonness of a luxurious and marvel-bringing pastime.

It grew colder, showing that the outside changes affected the depressed area, but the phantom light in the west was also a source of heat, and if we were to drop down further within lower craters, the "static heat of the earth," the Professor averred, would "increasingly raise the temperature."

Our meals of bird became monotonous, but though we saw fish in the lakes, we could not catch them. Our instruments, matches, ammunition, guns, and the indispensable pot and fryingpan, a few odds and ends in our pockets and some vestiges of other commodities in our packs made up our possessions. A change of under clothing we had vouchsafed ourselves, before we abandoned the sledge, and an under dress too of serge, so that,

though our skins and furs were thrown aside, "we might be able," as Hopkins said, "to meet the ladies of El Dorado without a blush."

The scenes around us, as we pushed westward, repeated themselves with inconspicuous changes, but we would often enter into pictorial compositions that exhaled an artistic beauty quite incomparable. It was after a ten hour tramp over the interminable savannahs, that the Professor, noting a cliffside, a unique feature, towards the north, we directed our steps thither. Then we encountered a picture that swayed us by its loveliness, and we ran into a zoological revelation also, that made our hair stand on end, so that the emotional antipodes thus experienced supplied us with some exciting themes for conversation.

We first stood at the beginning of a valley sloping from us with wide, graceful reaches. It lay between two series of hills, separated by minor valleys, whose contributions of water, in tree or bush-lined brooks, were added to the meandering river that subjugated all other impressions in its stately movement towards a far distant lake. This latter formed a great mirror of light on the horizon. The hills were much more deeply wooded than any we had passed, indeed the country assumed a new phase, and the languid inclines and faintly expostulating elevations here were replaced by more boulders and a piedmont-like picturesqueness.

And yet there dwelt in the picture a gentleness, an inviting softness of contour that was ingratiating, while the banked trees, the occasional escarpments of glistening rock, and that luminous, distant haze over the faraway lake tended to add strength and mystery. It was almost, by our chronometers, mid-day when we entered this delightful vale. Dark evergreens added a tonic charm to the coloring, and above us, scoring the

blue, were ranged radiating white ribs of compacted cumulus.

We had clambered up on the ledges of a rock exposure, encumbered at its base by huge, confused fragments, and edged at its summit by the bushy fortress of a white flowered low tree like a wild cherry. The *Anastatica*(?), so abundant in the country we had passed over, had disappeared, and with it, we surmised, that mirific population of cranes, herons, geese, and ducks that made the enchained lakes vocal with pipings, screams, haloos, and bugle calls.

"Looks good to me," exclaimed Hopkins. "Yes," I said, "if we could take that picture with us back to New York on a canvas or a film, or a plate, we'd have 'em guessing. It's a marvel. Pretty hard to believe we're at north latitude 84°. That's about it, Professor?"

"84°, 50′, 5″," replied the Professor sententiously, as he applied his lens and his eyes to a scrap of stone.

"New York?" snorted Goritz. "You surely don't ask for anything better than this. This is Eden." It certainly seemed so, and while Hopkins contented himself with the comment that he hadn't noticed any snakes about, we turned attentive ears to the Professor, who by this time had completed his enthralled study of the glittering schist in his hand.

"Azoic rocks," he cried, his becoming smile mantling his face, his red, prominent ears and his flaring hair making a droll combination. "Very early rocks; the Grenville Series beyond doubt, as named by the Canadian geologists; the first solidifications of the earth's crust, perhaps schists, granites and limestones, though *here* schists with pegmatite veins. An ancient circular axis surrounding a circular depression that has never been

covered by the later oceans. Gentlemen, we are probably now situated on the one point of the earth wherein the processes of evolution have never played any role, because marine life has never existed within it, and the processes of derivation which have supplied the dry land with their mammalian fauna from the animals of the sea have been totally excluded, unless—unless—," the judicial introspection and litigation which the Professor assumed at such critical points in his scientific homilies were always diverting, "unless the barrier had been broken at some point and the surrounding ocean admitted, just as Walcott has surmised may have been the case with the western protaxes of North America, when the pre-Cambrian seas introduced their life into the interior basin of the continent. We shall see, however; the sedimentary rocks of the inner circles (It was quite reassuring to observe the Professor's stalwart certainty about everything) will reveal that. Even had no such invasion been permitted, life, would have reached this isolated nucleus through the flight and migration of birds who might readily enough, as pointed out by Darwin, Wallace, Lancaster, Leidy and others, have carried the embryos of fish, the shells of molluscs and the larvae and bodies of insects hither, and the winds themselves may have assisted in this involuntary transit. The injection of seeds might have taken place in all sorts of ways. So far, you will observe that the faunal features, as might be expected, are very scanty, and true mammals are absent. The zoological peculiarities of this paleolithic bowl are absolutely unique. As a contribution to biological science our results promise to assume important proportions."

Under the stimulus of this flattering encouragement we resumed our way, following the banks of the beautiful river to that remote splendor, the

lake on the horizon, which seemed a fairy sea, where indeed might float argosies of an indigenous people which had been imprisoned in this inverted earth cone since human occupation of our earth began.

And it soon became apparent that we were again rapidly descending, a transition indicated by increasing warmth and the changed gradient of the river which was flowing rapidly, more rapidly, between thickset, outstretched arms of alder-like trees. Our interest was intense. The utter, incalculable strangeness of it all kept our nerves strung to an extreme tension. Sometimes we were simultaneously arrested by an overpowering mental revolt against it, as though we felt we had lost our senses, or as though some *trauma* had been inflicted on our brain, and then we stood staring, in absolute stupefaction. For all this was not simply new, it was superbly beautiful.

"Every way we're to the good," cried Hopkins. "We're walking right into a Safe Deposit that would make Rockefeller or Rothschild coil up in a colic of undisguised despair. That, in the first place. Then, we're mighty comfortable, well fed, careless and improving. That counts in the second place. And thirdly, if we get back to sanitary plumbing, carved food, and flats, we'll be able to put up a story that will keep the people—I mean everybody—gasping, and there won't be enough presses to print it, enough woodpulp to print it on, and I assume it's more than likely that we'll precipitate, as they say, the worst panic ever known, because nobody will be able to work until they've finished the story, and from appearances I think we could a tale unfold that might cover a thousand or more pages. Our copyright will be worth a king's ransom."

"But they won't read it because they won't

believe it," I said. "We'll be classed with Munchausen and old Doc. Cook, Symmes and Sinbad."

"Won't believe it?" exploded Hopkins. "Won't we show em? The Professor will rattle off the new species, and how about our buying out the government at Washington, and running the country just free of expense a few days, say for a week, to prove it? That will be convincing, I undertake to say. And then the pictures. The camera's working yet, and there are a dozen or so of film rolls. But don't worry. We'll be the biggest thing on the footstool, and then—some. Christopher has had a fair show, in fact he's been rather spoilt, but he'll have every reason to be glad he's out of sight when we get there. Why really it's hard to understand what won't happen."

At that we all laughed, and that relief made us serious again, and with eyes open, pencils scribbling, and an occasional click of the camera (Hopkins was our photographer) we hastened down the now somewhat contracting valley. An elbow of land pushed out and diverted the stream and on this point, where the river turned, swerving back into its first course, and where an expanse of yellow sand and pebbles furnished an open space from which the lake, the receding valley behind us, a gorge before us, the open sky, and the encroaching flanks of higher hills were all visible, we halted.

Hopkins seized the opportunity for a new flight of speculation.

"Do you know," and the shadow of a real embarrassment on his face fixed our attention, "I've been wondering who is to own this bailiwick. Of course we'll meet the native residents sooner or later—their shyness is a little unaccountable as it is—but you don't imagine for a moment that the first class national hogs of Europe would let a promising domain like this go unappropriated?

Not much. Those disinterested potentates would be up here before you could say Jack Robinson to prove how necessary it was for the peace of the world to cut it up at once. Gentlemen, this is an international question, and we're the only men who have a right to settle it. What do you say?"

"Oh, my portion goes to Denmark," chuckled Goritz.

"Mine too," I added.

"I owe allegiance to Norway," reminded the Professor.

"Funny—how clannish you are," continued Hopkins. "You're all as good as Americans, and you speak English. You've lived in the United States, and you know, way down in your boots, that she's the Hope of the whole earth; the only thing just now visible in the shape of government that cares two coppers for the under dog. Ain't that so? Well I'll tell yer," and Hopkins squinted, drawled, and put his long index on the side of his very presentable nose, "I'll tell yer. We'll give the Edenites a square deal, and let them decide. You see we can each take the stump for our own country, and then give them the choice at a general Primary Election."

"Will you let the ladies vote?" I asked innocently.

"Why not? Certainly. Ladies first," smiled back the gallant Yankee.

"Well then," I triumphantly concluded, "as they can't understand us, they'll of course, after the manner of their sex, be guided by LOOKS, and—America wins."

We shouted at Hopkins' discomfiture. He certainly looked nonplussed and aggrieved. He was shaping a retort, and his mouth had already formed the words "See here, Erickson; don't you fool yourself—" when there was a movement on the opposite bank. Almost instantly Hopkins' quick

eye was diverted, and his arm shot forward, indicating the intrusion, while he whispered in the stage-struck style, "*Look, look!*"

We turned as one man. Opposite, thrusting their heads out of the foliage of the bank, and revealing too the front quarters of their bodies were four wild pigs, a hog, a sow and two youngsters. The adult animals were of great size, with portentous mouths and snouts, flat cheek protrusions, hairy, pointed ears, and the animals bore two upturned involuted tooth horns or tusks on each side of their upper and lower jaws. The animals were black, their bodies covered with coarse, spiny short hair, bristling into a mane at the neck and their small, fiery eyes snapped viciously. They were large brutes, stout, muscular, possessed of a strange hollow grunt that rumbled ominously inside their heads for a while, and then became suddenly audible as a terrifying, snorting squeal. It was the oddest, most unaccountable animal noise any of us had ever heard. But the Professor complacently informed us that the creatures were undoubtedly related to the Forest Pig—*Hylochoerus meinertz hageni*—of British East Africa, and that their study would add a new chapter to natural history, while the skins of the monsters would be eagerly competed for by the museums of the world.

Hopkins dismissed this with a wave of his hand, urging the antecedent considerations of pork chops, fresh ham, and sausage. The subjects of this colloquy remained, however, undisturbed. Had we shot them there was no discoverable way in our position at the time to secure their bodies, and from the gastronomic point of view the Professor questioned their importance.

The pigs watched us nervously for a short time, then they grunted reflectively; their whitish-green eyes were almost distended in excitement and shone

with a blue light. But with a raised arm, a thrown pebble, and a shout from Goritz they flew off, crashing among the undergrowth and easily traceable in in their flight down the hillside by the wake of violently agitated shrubbery and herbs.

"An interesting encounter," remarked the Professor. "Its congener is found today over the slopes of Mt. Kenia at a high altitude, where the jungle and the forest meet, supposed by Akely to follow the trail of the elephant, and addicted to an inexplicable habit of scraping together leaves and grasses which it forms into diminutive mounds. We are coming into a warmer region, the increasing prevalence of acacia and eucalyptus-like trees, the occasional pitch pine, and something like an evergreen oak indicate that, though this floral association may be uncommon. I really believe that along the edges of that great lake ahead of us are—*palms!*"

It was only a short way from this delightful spot, with its sweeping view, that we heard the rush and roar of falling water, as we now fought our way through a tangled maze of branches, emerging at intervals on grassy glades which bore evidence of the past presence of the wild pigs. An hour later we almost tumbled over the brink of a rocky gulf, into which the gathered waters of the river obviously fell. We could not see the falls, but the spouting spray, rising in spiral puffs, the moisture showering through the trees, and the dull bass resonation from the tormented pool that caught the plunging torrent, announced its nearness.

It was a matter of some difficulty, making our descent, and the ropes again did good service in helping us down the vertical walls. It was pretty clear that we were about to meet a picture of some grandeur, for our climb continued, and when we finally broke through to the river again, we had

descended over three hundred feet. Fortunately we were not required to increase our exertions to reach a favorable position for enjoyment of the scenic wonder we had circumvented. It was before us.

Above us in a narrow sheet, in a setting of the wildest beauty, the river poured its flood, tense, glossy, when it first slipped over the rim, as with that *convulsive* firmness of the young swimmer at the first plunge over his head. Then it began unraveling its woven strands, and became plicated in silken ridges that unwound still more, or flew apart in diamond dust, so volatile that it rose upward in shimmers and rainbows, while at our feet, discharged from the overburdened pool, rushed a torrent of mobile beryl. It was transcendently lovely in the frame of trees; and how amazing to have repeated here, at the pole of the earth, the familiar charms of the woodlands and streams, the sylvan solitudes of the world in temperate and tropical climes where the sun rose and set each day throughout the year!

What was climate? "Climate," retorted the Professor, "is an atmospheric condition fundamentally dependent upon the heat received from the sun, but if there is light, that heat can come from the interior level of the earth itself quite as well."

"Yes," we exclaimed, "if there is light, but the light that, as with the sun, insures the processes of growth in plants, should not be here, for the sun has already run its course for the functions of vegetation at the North. What is the meaning of this continuous light that bathes this marvelous new world we have entered? Does it, like the sunlight, build up leaves, decorate flowers, strengthen twig and trunk?"

"Ah! Does it?" soliloquized the Professor. "*Solvitur ambulando;* look around us. What do you see?"

We did look around us, we were looking even then, and the scene was indeed rich in color, in greenness, in luxuriance perhaps of floral charm. This everlasting illumination, with the strange accommodation of the plants to an enforced sleep, almost maddened us with wonder. To be sure we found out later that the greenness changed, and, if we had studied the matter more closely we would have been made aware of a paleness in the grass (this condition had been evident for some days, while a peculiar effect within ourselves seemed referable to this inexplicable light). I will return to this when it has formed the topic of a later conference, held during those divine hours passed on the hills of the Deer Fels.

We now had satisfied our eyes with the picture show, and we hastened on, for our supplies of duck were almost exhausted, and, although the Professor had added to this a salutary and delicious spinach-like mess, made from the boiled shoots and tender leaves of a plant like our poke or pigeon berry, which grew abundantly in the valleys, yet we had become impatient for some change of food. The pigs suggested a new and appetizing novelty in our cuisine. This indication of game in the country we were approaching whetted our desire to begin a more stirring life, and to penetrate now rapidly towards the veritable center and solution of all this mystery.

It was not long before we had threaded the precipitous ravine, which from the foot of the falls extended into the park-like expanses about the great lake. A great lake it was, dotted with distant islands and embosomed in a subdued white land almost impossible to describe. The borders of the lake were marshy and flat, the water was fresh, and the vegetation in its neighborhood green. It was a physiographic anomaly to find this freshness enclosed in a land on whose face were written

most legibly the characters of sterility and dryness. The soil of the low hills was parched, and a cactus or euphorbia growth replaced the broad leaved plants which had pertinaciously clung to our steps up to this point, and had indeed pushed out into the plain, but with an evident aversion, as they became smaller, sparser, and at some remove disappeared altogether. The spiky stiffness of something like the Spanish Bayonet gradually assumed predominance, and the ashen tokens of sage bush (?) multiplied.

We concluded that in our hand-to-mouth method of subsistence it might be unsafe to venture forward on this trackless waste, and, still expectant of finally terminating our exploration with the finding of human beings, agreed to follow the margin of the lake. This would keep us supplied with food, would carry us on, apparently a little north of east, and as its waters were fresh, would doubtless offer some outlet of escape without compelling us to traverse the inhospitable barrens.

It was here that we shot some quail-like birds, which furnished a new element to our larder, and some acid and fruity berries proved edible, after our ludicrously careful experiments had tested their qualities. Then Hopkins ran against a formidable wild hog and laid him low, and while he did not prove exactly delectable, there was a noticeable difference from previous entries on our menus which made that addition welcome also. The Professor extracted some lard which helped as fuel and served to quicken into a blaze our sluggish fires.

The palms noted by the Professor were fully realized, and they made the most curious and extraordinary foregrounds, in conspicuous groups, against the dull lengthiness and vapid immensity of the chlorinated desert beyond them. It was at this time that we hit the zoological phenomenon

hinted at before, which completed our nervous prostration, if mental suspense and amazement represent that state. We were encamped about three days' journey from the deep glade from which we emerged on the plain, and were still following the marginal fertile tracts bordering the lake. The lake furnished some surprises.

Strips of muddy banks forming islands covered with a profusion of plants, among which might tower a palm, banks of marl wherein the Professor picked out cretaceous fossils, occasional warm springs, the condensed vapors of which floated lazily upward, and which, where they spouted from the ground, had erected basins of calcareous sinter, or their waters trickled to the lake between banks red and white like painted boards.

Our camp—a fire, our knapsacks, our multi-serviceable pot and fryingpan, and our outstretched figures, with the instruments, always including our camera outfit, a few implements and guns—was at the foot of a thicket of high ferns, under a group of palms, and we were at the base of an inconsiderable hill or rise, whose top these ferns and palms concealed. Hopkins had just returned from stalking some of the wild pigs, but he was empty handed; Goritz was very busy devising a stretcher or hurdle for our various belongings, to be carried between two of us, by turns, and the Professor was ruminating, with head in his hands, his wing-like ears protruding. I think I was asleep. Our supper had been made memorable by *tea;* a hidden package in one of our packs contained this precious leaf, and it was quite noteworthy how it revived and cheered us.

Well, I felt a sharp jolt, and a cavernous abyss yawned under my feet, and with a monstrous effort I snatched a providential branch and saved myself from falling. *My eyes opened;* I had seized Hop-

kins' leg, and it was he whose energetic shaking had broken my slumbers with this nightmare.

"Get a move on, Alfred. The scrap of the centuries is going on up there." He pointed to the grove and hilltop. "If we had a motion-picture camera, we'd have everything in that line knocked into junk. Get up. The White Hope is having it out with the sable champion."

Utterly bewildered by these incomprehensible words I struggled to my feet, and we both scrambled *pele-mele* to the top, and there joined Goritz and the Professor, who hardly noticed our approach, so absorbed were they in watching the strangest spectacle that ever human eyes beheld.

Out on the level on a thin carpet of herbs and grass was reared the violent and horrible shape of a writhing, bending, gracefully oscillating, whitish-green monster, and before him the infuriated figure of a black pig. The pig's bristling mane was erected, his small tail, like a bit of black rope, beat upon his muscular buttocks, his eyes gleamed viciously, his muzzle with its expanded nostrils was upturned, and his challenge sounded like a cornet, and again like a rolling drum.

But the creature before it mastered all attention. The elongated head of a saurian armed along its jaws with sword-like teeth, a long curved neck, a thorax but slightly enlarged over the width of the rest of the body, provided with a short pair of front legs, terminated by claws perceptibly webbed, and opening and shutting with a nervous rapidity, noticeable dull-colored scales striping its sides, a pair of much longer hind legs on whose skin-enwrapped, stilt-like support it had raised itself, and then a prodigious tail, heavy and fat at its protrusion, but lengthening out into a thin python-like body whose involuntary movements swayed it to and fro in serpentine motions through the flattened weeds.

THE CROCODILO-PYTHON AND THE WILD PIG

The color of the beast was most loathsome; a sickly yellow white it seemed at first; a closer study showed it to be a nauseating green, like a frog scum, and yet through it all, as if summoned to the surface at the will of the creature, coursed reddish blotches, whose inflamed contrasts gave the whole skin the aspect of inflammation, of purulent disease. This coloring prevailed over the neck, the faintly swelling belly, the sides, and over the hind rump and thighs and anal region. The monster awakened an awestruck repulsion. But at the moment its source, home, meaning, were swallowed up in the thrilling, tremendous combat between these strange litigants, a wild boar of today, a saurian—a *tyrannosaurus* or something like it—of the Cretaceous!

The huge lizard was skillful, wavering, crafty and sinuous. It swung from side to side, and when it attempted to descend on its antagonist its mouth opened, almost absurdly, as if waiting for the appetizing bite its hunger or its ferocity anticipated. A wicked mouth, shining with yellow teeth and slobbering with saliva! Any disposition to laugh at its floundering indecision was soon, or at once, overcome by hatred of its hideousness.

It was interesting to watch the hog. He was irresolute and then aggressive; he lunged outward and then tumbled backward. As the giant lizard reeled upward and then *poured* forward, the bristling pig would run in, and then "sidestep," as Hopkins said. The ultimate object of both combatants became increasingly clear; the saurian aimed at crashing down on the pig, and the pig relying on its sharp incisors intended to rip open the defenceless abdomen of its foe. Again and again with shifting success they attempted their invariable *coups*, and again and again recoiled, frustrated in their design.

The fight passed through one episode of some novelty. The saurian in flinging itself forward lost its balance, and, as it were, stumbled to the ground. We saw its eyes then, queer turgid, opal masses, lit internally with fire. In a trice the pig leaped upon its back, stamping and tearing, but, in another trice, the effort seemed incalculable, the huge tail of the snake lizard swept around and bowled the discomfited porker sideways with a swishing blow that knocked it down. Then for a moment it seemed as if the coiling ribbon would enclose the pig, when, held in its crushing vise, the lizard might dissect its victim at leisure. But the pig squirmed out of the trap, and, nothing daunted, resumed its defence with less obvious pugnacity. Except for its monstrous spectacular features the conflict grew monotonous. And here came the end.

Nature was exhausted; an unguarded moment of inattention and, like the black pounce of the eagle, the ponderous head of the lizard fell on the pig, the scimitar teeth cut into hide and bone. A snarling roar, an infuriated lacerating drive by the boar, and, though he sank sideways in a death agony, his tusks had torn open the belly of his conqueror. The viscera emptied from their enclosure, an abominable odor assailed us, and the great bulk of the amphibian lapsed to the ground, its inverted head, caught in the chancery of its body, broke its neck, and with a husky frightening exhalation, like a magnified hiss, it fell in convulsions. The pig was already dead.

Just then none of us were inclined to pursue any investigations. We were all absolutely silent, and all went back to our little camp in a state of mental consternation. The Professor had no theories to propose, nor had Hopkins any comments. As for Goritz, he mechanically brought out the gold belt, and as I bent over him and noticed its *relievos*, I

felt convinced that its designer and artificer had seen the saurian.

But something more awful occurred about three hours afterwards, when, as we observed, the smell from the battlefield became more and more intolerable. The waters of the lake were furrowed with approaching objects, exposed heads rose upon the shore, shuffling and waddling and scrambling creatures proceeded up the bank, and the entangled bodies of the great lizard and the pig were soon being torn to pieces, in the clapping jaws of the former's brethren, as they rustled and scraped against each other in their envious greed in what, by our reckoning, was their nocturnal banquet.

Soon, however, I fell asleep again; a feverish sleep it was and I welcomed my awakening. It must have been hours later, the lake was calm and beautiful to see in the mysterious light, and it was the cheerful, heart-inspiring voice of Hopkins that half restored my normal gaiety. He was helping the Professor at what in its serial position was our breakfast, and he prattled to his benignant comrade:

" 'We were amphibians, scaled and tailed,
And drab as a dead man's hand;
We coiled at ease 'neath the dripping trees
Or trailed through the mud and sand.
Croaking and blind, with our three clawed feet
Writing a language dumb,
With never a spark in the empty dark,
To hint at a life to come.' "

CHAPTER VII

The Deer Fels

I must hasten my story; so much remains to be told, more wondrous, strange and unnatural, though that last word is not to be interpreted in any of its senses as abhorrent. Far from it.

We hurried away from the scene of the peculiar combat and the fratricidal feast. I do not think we feared these hideous saurians. We looked for them, and the Professor exulted in their evident marks of an evolutionary history (philogeny, he called it) quite isolated or diverse from those established by Barnum Brown, Williston, Lowe and others for the *sauropsida* of the—Mr. Link I was actually going to say EARTH, in a foreign sense, for somehow in this Krocker Land we felt detached from all we had ever known or ever been. Had we been transferred to Mars or the Moon or any other inconceivably contrasted sphere, we could not have felt more illimitably separated from what we had called the Earth.

No more of the Crocodilo-Pythons, so Goritz called them, were seen. We believed that their habitats were in the half submerged broad flatlands that rose in archipelagos out in vast expanses of this inland sea. Perhaps we traversed a distance of one hundred miles before the mingled expression of sage desert and semi-tropical lake began to change. The opposite boundary of the lake (Goritz as our

geographer has named it the *Saurian Sea*) became visible. We were approaching a constriction or closing of its banks, and in a few days we perceived that it emptied into a wild, deeply sunken ravine or canon, an enormous, terrifying gorge of sandstones and limestones, where we could just dimly discern the foaming cataracts, the eye-like preparatory pools, and then the sweltering froth of raging rapids.

The water of the Saurian Sea enters this canon (the Canon of Promise Goritz called it, for a reason yet a long way ahead in my narrative) over an incline, and a series of waterfalls, which were invisible to us. It was hopeless to follow the canon, nor could we continue northward for we were powerless to cross the river. There remained the alternative of turning to the left, penetrating the sage plain and attaining the slopes of a hill country eastward, at whose feet doubtless the desert terminated. It promised to be an easy day's journey and it was. The quail had supplied us with food. They now replaced the ducks. Indeed the Saurian Sea became almost devoid of aquatic bird life as we advanced, an eloquent testimony we thought to the fear of the omnivorous brutes who lived there.

We crossed the desert and were delighted to observe its gradual surrender to the encroaching features of a pleasanter land, a hill country sloping away into painted domes; not a land of heavy rainfall nor deeply forested. Its undulating skyline presented rounded and densely shrubby ground which to our eyes seemed luminous with a pink haze. The flanks of these hills were clothed in a coarse grass unevenly distributed, and even absent from bare spaces of the limestone rock, where a gray half succulent moss flourished. We noted too with some astonishment that these aspects of the hills facing us seemed in shadow, contrasting effec-

tively with the singular pinkish aureole along their high outlines.

Goritz discovered with our glass the presence of moving or browsing groups of animals and a moment later exclaimed:

"They're deer, small deer. No worry now about the commissariat."

"You see," murmured the Professor, "the sedimentary rocks here prove that at some time this boreal basin has been invaded by the sea, a former deeper cavity has been filled up by these strata of limestone, slate, sandstone and marl. The molluscan remains, such as I have picked up, whether in the Saurian Sea area, in the Canon of Promise, or on these moors, are generically similar to those of the cretaceous, tertiary, and paleozoic rocks of Europe or America. About that there can be no doubt," and he approvingly exhibited the small collection he retained from his examination. "The outermost rocks of the Krocker Land Rim are the earliest crystallines and eruptives. Their solidification belongs to the very first primary conditions, and I think there can be no doubt that we can say that this stupendous cavity, continental in extent, either represents that physical polar pitting I alluded to when we discussed this expedition in Norway, made when the Earth was assuming its spheroidal shape and was a mass of swiftly revolving mobile magma, or—" the Professor's succeeding statement impressed him so solemnly, that his administrative and reportorial manner became almost gloomy in its earnestness. We watched him with dilated eyes—"or—that it represents the wound, cicatrix, and HOLE from which was ejected the earth's satellite—the MOON."

Comment was in order, but we had become rather plastic under the Professor's instructions, or, shall I say, gelatinized, and incapable of a natural

remonstrance against his dictations. But Goritz demurred. Hopkins and I listened with admiration.

"Professor, the moon came out of the side of the earth, centrifugally separated at the equator by fastest motion, surely not out of the pole. Darwin has suggested, you know, that the Pacific Ocean—"

"True, Antoine. True, true. I know all of George Darwin's speculations. True, but suppose the axis of the earth's rotation has changed; suppose this very area here at 85° north latitude had formerly been equatorial in position. That is a view of commendable authority. It has been urged to explain the Ice Age, though I admit, Goritz, it has not, today, the most respectable authorization.

"*Mais, passons.*" This theoretical retreat and deflection of the Professor before Goritz's criticism sensibly flattered my friend. "You see gentlemen, that these startling surfaces before us seem, as you have noticed, to be in shadow. I think that throws some light on the character of the singular continuous illumination of this region. Up to this point we have generally been descending, since we left the vapor shroud of the Perpetual Nimbus; we have been climbing down the walls of a bowl whose central sun is of sufficient intensity to illuminate it throughout its extent, but, having an inconsiderable volume or size as compared with the size of the bowl itself, and also—mark me—a fixed position, can only throw shadows when intervening objects occur, as a lamp in the middle of a room illuminates the whole room, but throws shadows toward the walls of the room, where there are obstructions. But the higher the position of the lamp in the room, with reference to the floor, the shorter the shadows. Here is an exact parallel, and I take it that as the shadow of these hills, which may be three thousand feet high, hardly extends into the plain, the fixed,

subsidiary SUN we are approaching may be towards the limits of our atmosphere, or say twenty-five miles over the mean level of the earth."

We grasped this quickly enough, and the image remained, as you will see in the sequel, substantially correct, though greatly corrected as to altitude.

The deer were easily trapped; they hardly noticed our approach, and, though startled by the discharge of our guns, would only scamper off for a short distance, herd in compact bunches, and watch us. They were small animals, perhaps half the size of the Virginia deer, but their flesh was delicious, and our first meal, graced with the coldest spring water and by a small toothsome red berry like a strawberry, imparted to us the liveliest spirits. We felt eager and excited, an almost irritable curiosity had developed within us; forgetful of all we had left, oblivious, through an inscrutable exaltation of wonder, of the things, objects and endearments of home, we hungered for adventure. It was not many hours later that a new sensation eclipsed everything we had so far experienced, and threw us into an excitement that stirred the depths of our beings.

Less than a day was consumed in making the ascent of the hills, which resembled steeply inclined moors, and on their summits we entered on a sunny (?) expanse, captivating in its loveliness of color, and ingratiatingly varied in topography. The tantalizing pinkish haze was explained. It was an endless billowy ocean of pale heather, with clumps of yellowness like gorze. As we looked over the entrancing picture in a golden light, in a freshening and tonic atmosphere, with a reverberant sense of being travelers in fairy land, a poem taught me long ago by an English friend came almost unbidden to my lips:

THE DEER FELS

" 'What, you are stepping westward? Yea
'Twould be a wildish destiny
If we who thus together roam,
In a strange land and far from home,
Were in this place the guests of chance:
Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
Though home or shelter he had none
With such a sky to lead him on? ' "

And westward we too went on.

Marshes, wet concealed bottoms, lakes and boggy tracts diversified these uplands; and down gulches in the bold profiled bays streams poured in cascades, all rushing westward. Coming over a lower neck between the domes we came in view of a dark blue lake of water far down in a narrow amphitheater; just above it on a higher shelf was a second smaller lake. What appeared to be white gulls were sailing in circles over them. The picture was a lovely one We clambered up its eastern wall, and, in the midst of low balsams that here interrupted the heather, and so thickly crowded together that you could walk on top of them, we looked straight into the pocket. We lay down on the short balsam trees, in a soft perfumed bed of green needles, and gazed and gazed. A strong wind blew. Far, far eastward rose that portentous bulwark of clouds and misty confusion which the Professor had called the "*Perpetual Nimbus*," and which was the cosmic screen of this wonderland. Hopkins was on his back, and it was he whose cry shot a new thrill of—How shall I name it?—laughing consternation through us.

"My God," he cried in a sort of stifled shout, "there's a gang of the fellows we're looking for, straight above us, in a cluster, like so many soap bubbles."

Again his summons brought us to a concentrated attention, and sure enough, dimly separable from the air in which it floated, was a minute cloud of

small balloons, and dependent from each group of three the outline of a small human figure—and all gently drifting in an upper current of air, certainly less strong than the brisk gale about us.

"Get under the trees," whispered Goritz, "they're coming down."

We were quickly concealed, burrowing our way with the alertness of moles below the thatched branches, and each eagerly hunting for a spying place whence we might watch this strange argosy. Yes! They were rapidly approaching; the dangling legs, the fluttering blue and yellow tunics, *confined by golden belts* (! ! !) were visible, curious unproportionate heads, hanging forward as if from heaviness, legs in loose trousers, and sandaled feet. Then the wind blowing about us touched them and, like a gyrating swarm of mosquitoes dispersed by a breeze, they were flung away, dancing, bobbing, hither and thither, and from them issued squealy shouts and squeaky laughter. They came together again, directed by means undiscoverable to us, though the Professor detected some waving objects in their hands, and then the crowd, perhaps twenty, as if suddenly apprized of their desired position, dropped like so many unsupported bodies straight into the deep pocket of the little lake we had just been admiring.

The wind did not drift them, the balloons seemed collapsible, but, to our amazement, they expanded again, checking the fall. In fact, unless our eyes deceived us, and we all agreed as to the main point, the balloons inflated and shrank, somehow at the will of these extraordinary beings, producing an effect not dissimilar to the opening and shutting of a bird's wing, the alternations of which carry it up and down.

As they slid past us, perhaps not more than a good stone's throw from our place of concealment

we were permitted to catch a glimpse of them, and it was hard to restrain the impulse of leaping to our feet to obtain a longer inspection. Another moment and they disappeared below the brow of the hill. We emerged cautiously. Goritz spoke first, though he, like the rest of us, seemed a little stunned by the weirdness, the wizardry of it all.

"If they've gone down, they must come up. But what are they?"

"Well," answered Hopkins, "search me! This is nearer to fairy land than I ever thought a human could get, and—I don't believe I like it. Rather goblin-like I thought, though not Gilbert's notion either;

> 'The goblin-imp, a lithe young ape,
> A fine low-comedy bogy?"

"Certainly the genus *homo*," said the Professor reflectively, and looking more startled than pleased. "They offer a field of unusual research. They might be," he lifted his eyes upward, almost as if imploring light on the subject, "they might be preadamites. They were not simian, not in the least. Gentlemen," sudden thought lit up his face with the customary smile, while his lips retreated, displaying his imperfect teeth, his eyes grew larger or they issued farther from their orbits, and his red hair, now inordinately long, draped his face in a rufous tapestry that made him look still more strangely excited. "Gentlemen, I have it ("Thank God," *sotto voce* from Hopkins), I have it. We have here an isolated group of mentalities that have been subjected to a restrictive and intensive process of development. Of course they had initially the prerogatives of reason. They have attained a peculiar culture, it may be a very one-sided one, but at least their methods of aeronautics leave little to be desired, and they understand and practice metal

working, textile arts; they have a language. Personal beauty they do not boast ("That's putting it mild; they looked like blueprints," again *sotto voce* from Hopkins) and their physiques seem dwarfed and impoverished. How did they strike you, Erickson? What did you see? Your linguistic knowledge may help us, and—I think you had our glass."

Parenthetically I may tell you, Mr. Link, that I have been a poor sort of a journalist, and a teacher of languages, and a traveler, a mixture of vocations not conducive, you will say, to signal distinction in any line.

"This is what I saw," I began, with an assertiveness that brought me wrapt attention. It was true that I had seen a good deal; my monopoly of our field glass had been complete. I spoke with rather crisp acerbity because I had already taken a strong prejudice against these jaundiced objects, and neither as associates nor as subjects of study was I willing to seek their acquaintance.

"They are diaphanous yellow anthropological *insects*, with big beetle heads dropping forward, scrappy hair or none at all, are anemic, short bodied, long legged, short armed, and absurdly pervaded by a saffron-blueness—I can describe it in no other words. You saw their dress; the tunic clothing them like a nightshirt or a butcher's blouse, is cinctured by a *gold belt!* They are scarcely more than three feet high."

"Alfred," asked Goritz, "are you sure about the gold belt? I thought I saw yellow links around their bodies too."

"Oh, yes," I replied indifferently, "the gold belts were plain enough, but Antoine, I tell you you had better leave these microbes alone."

The intensity of my repugnance amused them. I think it was shared by Hopkins. He said,

"They've rather got my goat, but the risk of seeing the thing out is worth taking. They certainly have the goods and, as for scrapping— Well, say, we could blow 'em away."

"Could you," I indignantly flared up. "Not so fast, Spruce. Did you see those tubes in their white fingers?"

"Yes, I saw them?" Hopkins rejoined interrogatively. "Looked like lead pipe."

"Well, I'm sure there's devilment enough in them. They raised them this way and that, and guided their flight by them."

"What's the harm?" Hopkins continued. "Perhaps they've a thing or two worth patenting in ballooning; very likely. They're funny enough, but—Pshaw!—we can run 'em in any time with these guns."

"How many balloons were attached to each person?" asked the Professor.

"Three," we all said together.

"I thought so," he continued, "one from each armpit, and one from the belt. They spoke distinguishable words. Could you make anything out of them Erickson?"

"Why," I muttered laconically, quite as a matter of course, "It sounded like corrupted or archaic Hebrew."

"By the Great Horn Spoon," shouted Hopkins, "*pawnbrokers*. Levitation would be worth while to some I've known."

After this explosion we were silent for a few moments. Our thoughts were running wild over the inscrutable occurrence which portended strange developments ahead of us. Hopkins was elated at the prospect of adventure, Goritz, I really believe, was consumed with a passionate curiosity to see more of the *gold*, the Professor was burning up with scientific wonder and excitement, and I alone

was overcome by a repulsion which I could not explain, and which, on the face of it, was unreasonable.

Communing thus with our thoughts and quite indescribably stirred, Hopkins cried out, "Beat it. Here they are again," and there, rising gently from the depth below our elevation came the little flotilla of bobbing manikins, announced even before they were seen, by a shrill chatter, and squealy laughter, which consorted naturally with their queer, aged, wrinkled faces, the fluttering tunics entangling their pipe-stem legs, and the odd diaphaneity of their bodies.

I am not a naturalist, Mr. Link, and there are some things in nature I cannot reconcile myself to: snakes, caterpillars and BUGS.

We were under our coverts in a jiffy; the celerity of our movement was something like the noiseless tail-up concealment in the ground of prairie dogs. And our eyes became as active as our legs; not an optic nerve but was strained to the full extent of its reportorial powers. One feature of their machinery, I had not noticed before. Flexible tubes tied the balloons to their bodies, and these again were connected under the sleeves of their tunics with the lengths of pipe they carried in their hands. The swelling and deflation of these balloons seemed most delicately under their control, and at times they would, like a swarm of flies, rise and fall, in a perfect mimicry of a fly's uneven and dancing undulations. It was most curious and utterly inexplicable, and then too when they moved to and fro or advanced, the tubes were held behind them, and some propulsion ensued which carried them on their flight, though it was quite evident that any volition on their part was quite overcome by the prevalent currents of air. The latter they avoided by rising above or sinking below it, and at the moment, as we

gazed, they surrendered themselves to the wind blowing about us at our elevation, and were tossed along it, in shrill enjoyment, and vanished westward. They were absorbed in misty veils that were drawn between us.

Once more we came out of our hiding with a ludicrous astonishment painted on our faces. Hopkins looked the least bit scared. Almost instantly he expressed his feelings.

"They certainly have me guessing. Old guys, all of 'em. Perhaps they're terribly old, and perhaps that's the way up here—everything very old shrinks, wrinkles and wears glasses."

"Glasses," called out Goritz. "Yes! I saw that, and do you know for more than a week my eyes have ached. It's something to do with this strange light."

Then came the confession from all of us, that we had each been bothered with our eyes. Shooting pains, blurry outlines, whizzing sensations in our heads, and a sense of dryness of the eyelids, as though they had been overheated by a mild excema of the skin. It was surprising, the moment we attended to the matter, how urgent our complaints became, and how communicative we were about it.

"I feel sure," said Goritz, "that we are bewitched by this light. These odd creatures have become crinkled and gnarled by it. They're a race of dwarfs, prematurely aged and megalocephalic."

This last daring incursion into the Professor's domain of reserved scientific language rather startled us. " 'Peaching on the Professor's preserves," whispered Hopkins. But the Professor did not resent it. It was some minutes later, after an expectant silence, that he very demurely suggested that we all put on our snow goggles. And we did. It seemed to help.

Of course, considerably flustered over the unex-

pected appearance in this utterly unexpected manner of the aboriginals of this enigmatical region, we undertook to examine the narrow and deep little valley into which our visitors had descended. It was a rough scramble, as the sides of the pit proved not only very steep but unreasonably rocky, sharp and precipitous. When we finally reached the bottom, and the Professor exultantly told us the rock was a dolomite, that it contained coral remains and brachiopodous shells that were Devonian, we found ourselves in a peculiar place.

It was a kind of gigantic well, on the floor of which and to one side were situated the two little lakes we had seen from above. Considerable water flowed into them from crevices in the walls, and the place was overshadowed at one point by a projecting ledge that formed a portico to a cavernous recess. Leaden colored fish rose and sank in the water of the lakes, and we thought the gulls, who must have penetrated to this remote asylum from Beaufort Sea, had been attracted by them. It proved to be a dreary, bare hole and instilled in us a feeling half despairing and melancholy.

"This isn't the gayest place in the world," said Hopkins. "Our insect friends certainly didn't come here for recreation. Looks like a smuggler's retreat, or a den of crime. Perhaps we may find here some enchanted troubadour, a chained damsel, a lurking dragon, or the fountain of eternal youth, which those cadaverous anchorites we saw upstairs visit occasionally to keep the life in their shivering shells. Or—"

"What's this?" exclaimed Goritz, his muffled voice proceeding from the recess into which he had penetrated, entering its prolongation, which became a sort of cave.

We rushed forward, all keyed now to an excited limit of curiosity, so that, as Hopkins expressed it

afterwards, "an invitation from the angel Gabriel to step into Paradise, wouldn't have phased us much, in fact would have been an ordinary incident in our investigations."

"What is it, Antoine?" I cried as I reached him and found him gazing in bewilderment at a shining nodule of something ahead of him, in the deeper gloom within. I asked no more questions, but stood still with him, wondering. The others came up and we all gazed awhile, transfixed by a common astonishment.

The glowing mass, perhaps about the size of a baby's closed hand, shed a mellow radiance about the cave; its light draped our own figures, and it was reflected from innumerable bright points which spangled here and there on the floor and walls like minute lamps.

"Diamonds," murmured Goritz, awestruck.

The place was heated, and the light made us shade our eyes. The Professor had moved alertly forward in an impulse of almost desperate joy. He stood in wrapt contemplation of the luminiferous chunk, then he struck one of the scintillating projections, a piece detached itself, and showered some splinters through the air to the ground. The splinters shimmered like microscopic mirrors.

"*Sphalerite*," he cried. "Zinc sulphide! This is literally a chamber of Sphalerite, a huge pocket enclosed in the limestone. It has been worked somewhat; its extension in the rock is probably very deep; and, gentlemen," this apostrophe accompanied by upraised hands, palms supplicatingly held towards us, always denoted some especially disturbing or exhilarating announcement, "this light proceeds from some natural *phosphori*. It may be," he paused to allow our minds to adjust themselves to a new attitude of marveling, "it may be RADIUM. We are in a world of transmuta-

tions, the home of the Stone of the Philosopher. In the world we have left—" the language was positive, convincing, for now the feeling of translation from all the familiarities of the world of Europe and America grew persistently, even though plants and animals expressed a similar life—"in that world, the combined product of all its mines, of all its laboratories, scarcely exceeds Two Grammes. Here is perhaps four ounces, or the Quarter of a Pound, and—"

It was then that a black clot, shaping itself in irregular fingers with blue and yellow fringes revolving raggedly around it closed my eyes. But before vision departed, I saw the Professor clutch his breast, stagger forward, and I heard him cry, "Out, out!" and then I felt my knees stung by the pointed stones and, blindly groping, I crawled away.

It was later, I do not know how long, that I recovered my sight and around me, languid and prostrate; though reviving as I was, were my comrades.

"Transmutation?" said Hopkins, feebly smiling. "It was pretty nearly a transference *over the river*, and no return trip-slip either."

"Heaven! How my head aches," groaned Goritz.

"Gentlemen," the Professor gurgled, flat on his back and sicker than any of us, but with his scientific apparatus under control and working smoothly, "we are on the eve of great discoveries. The papers which I can prepare for the Royal Academy of Sciences will throw a flood of light on a subject hitherto only darkly approached. I am confident that we were in the presence of a monstrous—monstrous comparatively, you observe—mass of radium. Further, I feel sure that the Stationary Sun that maintains a perpetual day in this remarkable land has something to do with radium emanations from the Interior of the Earth!"

The poor gentleman stopped abruptly, some peculiar evidences of his own interior activity just then making him roll over and refrain from speech, because he was *otherwise engaged.*

"Do you suppose," asked Hopkins, "that those aeronautical hairpins left that gold brick inside there?"

"Certainly," answered the dilapidated Goritz. "And they were up to something curious perhaps. Why, somehow I can only think of Aladdin and the lamp in the Arabian Nights. You remember it?"

"Of course, Antoine, but you see there are devilments here that are not so very beguiling or so very profitable. At any rate let us get out of here. The wind has risen; a storm is coming on. The darkness above looks interesting; in this hole it will be just stupidly pitch black. I feel half suffocated in this pit. There isn't a very promising chance for our survival if we go on into this radium land, with a sun made of radium, when a handful turns us into puppets and pretty nearly into corpses. I say leave it, leave it all. It's madness to go farther."

"You are mistaken—mistaken," interrupted the Professor, who had regained his composure. "The proximity—the reflections—our own unadaptability—fatigue—the closeness of the confined space and the—the—unmitigated monotony of our food made us ill. No—no—We must see it all. It will be the miracle of the century."

He gasped out his remonstrance and explanations in dissected sentences that measurably restored my good humor, so funny were they. A little later and we had set about getting back to the balsams on the cliff top, and to the small shelter we had so far managed to construct, and whose protection in a storm seemed very attractive. The storm itself in these strange quarters promised new scenic

effects, and its meteorological features might exceed all possible anticipation. Three of us had become ecstatically anxious to see everything, one of us (myself) shrank from his own baleful premonition of the future.

But we had reached the height, and the freshness of the air restored our equanimity, and made our strength whole again, and before us, with slow divulgements of unusual grandeur, spread the black skirts of a storm. But it was not over us, though patches of cloud were streaming from the west in hurrying phalanxes, dun, disordered, driven, as if under orders. And far off, beneath, it almost seemed, that strange stationary sun now half eclipsed, the hurlyburly of an inordinate atmospheric disturbance was visibly in operation.

The impression almost instantly made was that of a cyclonic movement—a suction of the air into the maelstrom center of a revolution that was gathering from the four quarters reinforcements of cloud and wind. A dull yellow light shone through occasional gaps in the aerial concourse of vapors, fish-gray chasms opened out at moments as if torn apart by uprushing or irrepressible volumes of wind, and, lit up by sharper flashes, they would suddenly evert, pouring out in boiling currents torrential black clouds. Then a cap of darkness seemed to descend, and yet in the remnants of light that stuck here and there to the flanks of this mountainous obscuration, we could see the multitudinous scurryings, windings and collisions of the smoking flails and banks and missiles of cloud.

Below this indivisible commotion, between it and what seemed the earth, stole or lay a stratum of light, and into this, slowly evolving like a gigantic corkscrew from the storm above, grew downwards, streaked with black, pillars of condensation, that

were nothing else than water-spouts, terrible tornadoes in traveling helices, erect, inclined, and stalking towards and away from each other like watery titans.

We thought we even saw their conjunction and dispersal, but what was visibly secure in the picture was the ascent heavenward of an intolerably wild dust avalanche. The whiteness, for such it seemed, smote and penetrated the clouds; it swerved and was beaten into straight ribbons of livid light, or, mingling universally, adulterated the inky burden with a spurious ghastly filminess. Flashes of lightning (a rare phenomenon in the north) that must have been terrific in intensity and portentous in size bit through the darkness, and rumblings reached us from the remote conflict. Then agglomeration and colossal curdlings and it all was swallowed up in night!

We talked long that night upon the excitements of the last ten hours, and it was plain to each one of us that we were again approaching descents to parts still farther below the levels already passed; that the storm was over a distant depression; that in the last day or two the actinic power of that strange radiance that lurked somewhere in the skies over this depression was becoming stronger and more intolerable; that we might expect to find the incredible influences of Radium in all this; that perhaps in some way that Sun we saw, we felt, which was the photal center, provocation and cause of the plant life around us, and through which we had passed, was now limiting or suppressing it; the unmistakable dust or sand tornado showed a desert region before us. Then, too, we discussed the poverty of the faunal life, now growing thinner, smaller, more depressed as we advanced, the sallowness of the grass, the blueness of leafage, the anemic pinkiness of the heather, our own tortured

feelings of alternate hope and apathy, of well being and of sickishness.

The bleaching, killing effect of this radium light (so we called It) was partially overcome by the rainfall which operated favorably for the plants. In hunting the small deer, and even they became more infrequent, we noticed that they occupied the shadowed sides of the hills and, in this stationary light, these shadowed sides remained almost unchanged. I say *almost*, because it became more and more apparent that the stationary Sun stirred. It rose or fell or approached or receded. There was some fluctuation too in its light. It was not a lamp hung in the sky but an *aura* that floated inconstantly over or around some central pivotal, causal spot, that varied also in its emanations.

Should we go on? I was silent. Overwhelming as might seem the inducements to break through the veil of the mystery before us I hesitated—No, I recoiled. But this was flagrant treachery to the spirit and ambition of exploration. So I was silent. Goritz dreaming of his Ophir and Golconda, was impatient to hurry on. Hopkins felt that there was nothing else to do; his doggerel helped him out:

> " 'What matters it how far we go?' his scaly friend replied,
> There is another shore, you know, upon the other side."

But the Professor was resolute. Here were all his predictions fulfilled—the vortical polar pit, the warmth, the aborigines, Eden reminiscences (he referred to the Crocodilo-Python) and now, what, so he modestly admitted, he had never dreamed of, the—

METROPOLIS OF RADIUM.

Go on? Of course.

CHAPTER VIII

The Pine Tree Gredin

After we had jerked some of the deer meat, fearing that the diminishing chances for game would leave us unsupplied, and as yet quite mystified as to where or when we would engage the pygmy people, we took up our loads and went on. The storm whose gyrating fury had absorbed our attention had raged itself away, though it was some thirty-six hours before it cleared, and, slowly liberated from the thickly wrapt curtains of gloom, the now more and more obvious sun shone again. The upland we were crossing caused us many perplexities. The numerous broad troughs and depressions, the tracts of tangled dead bushes and the hedges, resembling "pressure ridges" of ice, which had been somehow shaped by prevalent winds into long fences of scraggly, prostrate trees, were increasingly interspersed with sandy expanses, which we interpreted as the melancholy presages of a desert area beyond.

The average elevation was level, with a tendency to fall as we advanced. We expected daily to reach some abrupt drop which would announce our descent into the "last hole of the Golf Links," to quote Hopkins. The scheme of Krocker Land grew daily more and more convincingly simple. Whatever limital lines embraced it, it was a sort of amphitheater, with the serial displacements up or

down which we had already traversed succeeding each other concentrically; it was temperate in climate; it might become torrid because of its inclusion in the deeper parts of the earth's crust, or because, even more probably, it was situated over some residual uncooled igneous magma. It was encircled, we assumed, by the profound crevice we had bridged below the Rim, and its extraordinary sun which gave light and heat was practically concealed from external detection by the gigantic vaporous wall of the "Perpetual Nimbus," endlessly created by steaming and evaporation from the crevice itself, reinforced, too, by the turbulence of the general atmosphere, which for days and days had presented a turmoil, or else a dead waste, of cloud-filled skies.

We thought of that outer world now slowly—nay, rapidly—succumbing to the tightening grip of frost and snow and ice, now again dark or visible only in that strange sepulchral glow of aurora and stars; of that vast Arctic desolation, the shrouded corpse of a world, and of the gathering legions of snowflakes endlessly dropping or whirling from the blue-black empyrean; of the ice pack formed like a vise around the empty, tenantless shores, and groaning under the lash of the winds or the tyrrannous push of the tides; of the distant eastern Arctic lands, pale with ghost lights over glacier and mountain, inland ice, trackless coasts, black rock-bound capes and the blue domed igloo of the Eskimo; a land hallowed to thought by heroism; on whose barren plains the monuments to the dead rise in the wastes feebly to tell of devotion, courage past knowledge to measure, faithfulness; where the polar bear and the walrus alone maintain nature's plea against utter death.

How those thoughts contrasted with all this around us, an undulating oasis in the polar desert,

where now indeed the antipodes drew near in some strange new development of sand and aridity. Somehow this latter notion clung persistently. It was partly due, no doubt, to a natural ascription of deadly power in the inexplicable Sun, whose strength each mile was revealed in a more deadly manner; in part also to the decrescence of life, now noticeable in many ways. There was a paling and bleaching of the herbage, and for miles and miles the movements of insects were almost absent, while the deer vanished, and only moles or shrews were occasionally detected in the crookedly ridged ground.

It was after five days' continuous struggle over the back of this lumpy and semi-mountainous region, whose charm for us had long before disappeared, and when the sharpest scrutiny no longer disclosed the little deer whose succulent steaks and chops had kept us happy and well, eeked out with water, and the still persistent berry I have mentioned, that we reached the edge of a new descent. Shielding ourselves in a low coppice of bushes from the peculiar light, which was sensibly increasing in strength and which seemed less softened by the interposition of veils of mist and cloud, we could just see, like a black ribbon painted along the horizon, a zone of tree tops.

"TREES," we shouted joyously.

"Yes, they are trees," after a while came the affirmative assurance. The Professor was studying them with our field glass.

"They are trees, of some narrow leaved or coniferous genus. They are so densely, darkly gathered together. A wood now would indeed be welcome, but we are fated for a rather trying march over another desert. I can see a sand plain stretching away ahead of us, terminating perhaps in this new region beyond. I have a strong presenti-

ment that this wood forms the last screen to the grand revelation we are certain to be vouchsafed. It surrounds the home of the RADIUMITES."

"That's a cheerful view of it, Professor, and not a bad name. And if we are getting as warm as all that don't you think we might conjure up some plan of operation before we meet these—these—*electrons*? How's that, Erickson? You see I have a talking acquaintance with Science after all, even if I haven't got so far as to call her by her first name. Electrons and Radiumites are rather related terms. Eh?"

"Well," I said, "Hopkins' suggestion is surely a wise one. These remarkable creatures have obtained some curious insight into chemical laws. They are our masters if we meet them. Before we can do a thing they will transfix us with chemical ions, or something like them, and decompose us into our original elements. I've been thinking about those little lead pipes they carried. I saw them press them and wave them, and whenever they did either, something happened; they went up and down, or any way else, as they wished. The balloons were not so very small; they appeared, I think, smaller than they really were, and they did look too small to lift their loads, little and light as they seemed, even if they contained our lightest gas-hydrogen. I tell you they've refined methods in radio-chemistry perhaps, that enable them to generate an even lighter gas, and its buoyancy is out of all proportion to the gas volumes represented in these small balloons. These little men are formidable savants, who may get rid of us, if they want to, like that," and I snapped my fingers.

This harangue stirred the Professor. I meant it should. His hair, which now seemed almost redder than when we started, and had grown so that it enveloped his head in a penumbral glory, like a sunset fire, rose, as it were, to the occasion.

"Erickson," he retorted, "put away your fears. The very fact of the intellectual promotion of these people would make it certain that they have abandoned savage ways, and that they would recognize in us, to say the least," it may be the Professor blushed slightly, though the rufescent splendor of his hair disguised it, "representatives of a culture that will excite their curiosity, their—Ahem—*envy*. Personally I feel confident that—Ahem—once some sort of communication is established between us, I can interest them. I should feel honored even to present their contributions to science before the Royal Academy of Sciences at Stockholm. In the hierarchy of scientific authors their names would arrest the attention of the whole earth."

After this flight there was a respectful pause, until Hopkins resumed:

"Say Professor, the particular culture that would impress them most now would be a wash, a clean shirt, a shave and a haircut. Eh?"

The Professor contemptuously ignored the interruption, though a furtively repressed approach of laughter on his face showed his appreciation of its justice. We were indeed frights.

"And, Alfred, as to your suggestion of a gas lighter than hydrogen in the balloons, perhaps you are aware that so far as the apparent transmutation of the elements permits any conclusions in the matter, hydrogen has hitherto yielded only helium, neon, carbon and sulphur, all heavier bodies. I don't say you are not right. It's tremendously interesting. However, you may have underestimated the size of the balloons and over-estimated the weight of the little men. They had a very *papery* look to me, and of course, "the Professor always had this pragmatic style of insisting *you knew*, when he was inwardly crowing over his

chance of illuminating your ignorance, "you know that the levitation of hydrogen equals seventy pounds to one thousand cubic feet of gas—at ordinary pressures. Those balloons were larger than they seemed; some reflexion in the air diminished them, and really those aged infants, I believe, scarcely exceeded thirty pounds in weight. Do you know," he became excitedly radiant, "perhaps their tenuity has some relation to their intellectual development—they represent some final stage of human evolution, when the body shrinks, and the mind enlarges, and—"

"The teeth drop out," suggested Hopkins.

"True, Mr. Hopkins. Professor Wurtz has pointed out the probable absorption of the teeth or their disappearance under the debilitating influence of mental growth. These people may live solely on saps, juices, milks, liquids, extracts."

This tickled Hopkins boundlessly, and he rattled away—I don't know whether it was quotation or improvisation:

"Really I hesitate to say,
What they promise now some day,
When learning and brain
Are fit for the strain,
Of telling the Truth to a hair.

"For the *Docs* have puzzled it out,
And there isn't a reason to doubt,
That we'll lose all our grinders,
All our gold-plugged reminders,
Of the toothache that taught us to swear.

"It's a case of gray matter and such,
Though for that we need not care much,
For—cocktails and chowder for lunch,
Soft drinks, sangaree, and rum punch
Will surely be living for fair."

"Come," growled Goritz, "this sort of nonsense isn't getting us anywhere. Strap up your packs and get out of this. The chances for grub ahead are not the best in the world. The country is already as bare as a cleared table, and what are we going to do for water?"

That was a disagreeable predicament. Hitherto the springs, little tarns or water holes, though decreasing in number as we advanced, had fully met our requirements, but if we were to cross any considerable dry tract we might be seriously imperiled. To be sure, the limestone country if prolonged would almost certainly feed us, but that desert land which our closest inspection of the distance only made more unquestionable— How about that?

The conclusion we came to was to husband all the resources we could command. It sounded grandiloquent—*our resources!* What were they? Some patches of jerked deer's meat, our fryingpan and pot, the remnant of our improvised tent and our knapsacks, almost empty except for the instruments, a few necessary implements, the ammunition, still sufficient, and our guns. Our clothing was desperately worn. Literally, we were in rags, but a primitive kind of treatment in water, from time to time, had freed this dejected apparel of at least a large percentage—I really think a preponderant percentage—of its dirt. The question of water remained urgent.

In about a day or so we came upon the outlines of the desert plain—scrappy expanses of sand and pebbles—mostly angular, and we noted the dust occasionally sweeping heavenward in yellow clouds but still we thought we also saw the dark farther zone of trees. Our horizon was now more limited; we had descended some fifteen hundred feet, and the advantage of an elevated circumspection was denied us. The professor determined the sand to

be a pulverulent shattered and crumbling limestone, and although absorbent and apparently deeply bedded he believed we could, almost anywhere, upon digging find water. This was encouraging, and the trip over this tawny and sometimes dazzling waste seemed less formidable. The light became peculiarly tantalizing and objectionable, and we were thankful enough for the goggles. After deliberation we made up the canvas of our little tent, which we still retained, into bags (we had pack thread and sailors' needles) and expected to use them as water carriers. Then we trapped a few moles, though recourse to this unpalatable flesh would only be considered in an extremity, and then, not without foreboding, we started over the pallid desert.

We soon came upon traces of the great storm which we had watched from the Deer Fels. These were unmistakable. Deep gouges had been made in the sand by the volleying and cutting winds, but the most extraordinary vestiges of its violence were the conical hills of sand, raised over the surface in huge mammilary erections. These were distributed with a very striking evenness, except at spots, where it would seem the moving hills in their translation had closed upon one another, and, demolished in the collisions, left formless congeries of tossed and sprawling heaps, which might have a length of a mile or more, and were from half to three quarters of a mile in width. They were disagreeable obstacles, and ploughing through them was the hardest kind of work, for the surfaces were composed of a deep deposit of minute grains and dust and our feet sank into them as quickly as though we were engaged in a plunge through a colossal flour bin or a wheat pit.

But our complaints and discouragements were providentially rebuked. Fighting our way up and

down these dry quagmires of dust, stumbling, falling and not infrequently assisting to extricate one another from the floury embrace, we had come to the crest of a ridge which crossed diagonally one of these shapeless, tortuous mounds. This ridge, over the mean level of the plain, was almost twenty feet high, a good measure of the strength of the wind suction which had built it up. We were dusty, almost exhausted, and the water we had carefully conserved, as best we might (for the bags were not watertight) in our canvas receptacles, was approaching a dangerous depletion. It was absolutely necessary, fight against it as we might, to wash our mouths and throats, clogged and asperate as they were with the grains and dust, quite often, or, it seems to me, we would have been suffocated. What gratitude we felt you may imagine, when, on surmounting the ridge, our eyes fell upon a small pool of water entrapped upon some impervious bottom, in a natural bowl, enclosed by the ridge on which we halted and a lower ridge beyond us. The familiar thought of how it transcended in value any imaginable wealth of gold and diamonds at that moment flashed, I guess, through all of our minds. We camped there. The water was clear and cool, for, I should have mentioned it, the weather had been colder, and, when our "fixed Sun," as Goritz called it was hidden, we suffered somewhat from imperfect protection.

"Queer we don't hit any more of those weird phantoms that own this place, isn't it?" said Hopkins.

"Oh," I replied, "they may be watching us now, listening to us. You can't tell. I think they're a sort of supernatural people that can do almost anything. Perhaps they wear magic cloaks, hats, shoes, that make them invisible. Speak easy when you meet 'em Spruce, and don't abuse them

behind their backs, for—it may be—*to their faces.*"

"Look here, Alfred, I really believe you've loosened a nut in that tight little head of yours. To hear you talk gets on my nerves. Don't do it. Hasn't the Professor explained it all as Evolution, and how exceedingly friendly these fine folk will be to us when they get a bead on our own families. As for speaking easy, I shan't speak at all. With me it's the case of Pat once again, and I couldn't get even as far as he did with the Frenchman with his "*Parlez vous francaise, and—give me the loan of your gridiron.*"

"Alfred," asked the Professor, "could you talk with them, if it turns out that their language is Hebrew?"

"Certainly," I answered, "I am a Jew, and my earliest training has never been forgotten. I have been hugging the thought that I can understand them or make them understand me. I grant, along traditional lines there was something Hebraic in their looks."

"Yes Alfred—this," said Hopkins, touching his nose.

We laughed, but the Professor stared at me thoughtfully.

"Alfred," at length he solemnly began, "the Vestiges of Creation— Who knows but—"

The sentence was never finished and to this day I only dimly suspect the lurking and indefinable thought that those world-dreams of the past, with Eden placed at the North Pole, and a still more irreclaimable theory of a residual population descending from some God-made primal ancestor, confusedly rose in the Professor's mind, and that he was groping his way to express this cryptic and impossible illusion.

No! the Professor was probably utterly

stunned into dumbness, as we were made half wild with wonder by a cry from Goritz:

"SEE! Over there are the head and arm of a dead man sticking out through the sand."

We jumped to our feet, followed with our eyes his stiffened, outstretched arm and rigid finger, and saw the chubby face of a corpse, with closed eyes, streaming black hair, pushed out from a blanket of sand, while an arm with a clenched hand was protruding from the same covering. For a moment—perhaps for several—we remained motionless, perusing the face which was so astonishingly contrasted with the lineaments of the diminutive aeronautical philosophers, and noting too the convexity of the earth covering the body, which indicated a man or woman, of an average size or a little undersized. What struck each one of us at once was the unmistakable Eskimo type, the narrow eyes, small *joufflu* nose, wide mouth, puffed cheeks, low forehead and coarse, straggling and profuse hair.

A little later and we had dug out of his grave the astounding figure. When it was uncovered it corroborated all our first impressions as to its Eskimo relationship, but we then detected that its construction was more slender and generally better proportioned, and the beardless face was more refinedly cut. Its dress was a yellow gown or tunic over very loose bluish trousers, and its feet were encased in roughly made loose slippers, fastened by laces or strings over the instep. The material of the dress was a woven wool. The tunic was clasped by a broad belt of the same substance, fastened by a leaden buckle; the trousers were held in at the bottom by a kind of anklet of bone and skin, and the sleeves of the tunic were similarly confined.

But perhaps it was the buckle that excited our

curiosity the most, for there was engraved—not embossed—on it the same serpent and crocodile-like figure that had been seen on the gold buckle Goritz found, and over it too were the singular conventions of a branched tree encircled by a snake. Goritz compared his belt and buckle with it and was convinced of their identical interpretation. Nothing else was found. We detected no pockets of any sort in the clothing— Yes, there was something else, from under the body we dug up spectacle-like yellow glasses.

It was clear that the creature had been overwhelmed in a sandstorm, but it was not clear why he should have been alone and apparently wandering a long way from his home and companions. The incident incited us to greater haste, and when we had replenished our water skins, we resumed the exhausting tramp. The tree line became increasingly plainer to view, and it offered a goal and prize now that dissipated our fatigue and roused our ambition. We had not discussed the Eskimo waif but I guess through all of our minds slowly or quickly filtered the conviction that he represented a lower slave or working group; that we were soon to break into a world of industry and achievement, founded on social distinctions; that indeed up here in Krocker Land flourished perhaps an oldtime class regime with knowledge and power confined to a priestly or imperial class, like Egypt, like Mexico, like Peru.

Some of my first trepidation over the adventure had vanished, but much remained. I felt no confidence in those uncanny air travelers. Goritz became impatient and almost retaliatory; he was maddened by the vision of wealth, for he dreamed we were coming close to some dazzling, incalculable phenomenon of riches. Hopkins was good-naturedly suspicious and apprehensive, but con-

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fessed to an overpowering desire to see the thing out, and "*have it over.*" The Professor lived in the seventh heaven of delectation over the prospect of preparing a batch of papers, to be read before the Royal Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, that would place his name high on the walls of the Temple of Knowledge. All of us were thus anxious to get on, and we made rapid progress. Need there was, for our provisions were again nearing exhaustion.

It was almost a hundred and twenty hours, or five days, since we had left the Deer Fels before we dragged ourselves into the first grateful shadows of the great *Pine Tree Gredin.* So Professor Bjornsen termed it. Such it was. A vast, plunging hillside or scarp, covering miles and miles, and appareled from top to bottom with this wonderful vesture of tall pines. And it sang with the refreshing music of innumerable brooks. The exhaustless reservoirs of water emptied upon the vast desert zone which, almost without leaving a trace of greenness behind them, entered that profoundly weathered and comminuted soil, engulfed completely, as are the rivers of California or Colorado or Persia, and reissued unsullied, purified and cold, over this pine tree steppe.

The exhausted pilgrim through Purgatory who sees the gates of Paradise open to him, would, for Christians, furnish a description of our feelings as, ragged, choked with dust, almost crazed with thirst and speechless from fatigue, we threw ourselves at the foot of the first towering grove, and sank our heads into its moss lined bowls of living water. As a Jew I myself recalled the pretty fable of "*The Slave Who Became a King*" and all that the shipwrecked wretch had felt when the new people he had reached made him their king and fed and clothed him; for indeed to us, as Nefesh was to

Adam, this new stage was the Island of Life. I had reason to remember the story more literally afterwards.

And the marvelous stateliness of this blue-green ocean of straight trees, the entrancing vistas between the majestic columns, with a life of pheasant and hare and squirrel, the bubbling cadences of springs, and the rambling mirthfulness and riot of the brooks, the deep-browed silence in places, and the needle-thatched ground, inviting us to sleep and dreams, had a fabulous expression, as if the prelude to some unearthly—See how the whole unreality of it haunts me—experience. But, besides its picturesqueness, we rejoiced in the dusk-like protection from the light; in the effect and feeling of a dark submarine immersion, the light became so beryl-like, that we again, and now as it were *en masse*, encountered fresh reminders of the still invisible people we must soon see face to face.

There were clearings which had been made in the forest. They were dotted with stumps and crossed by fallen trunks, and made outlooks from which we saw the interminable distances of serried ranks of trees. Far to the right, far to the left, far before us with as yet no determinable limit in any direction, the gigantic flood of pines flowed ceaselessly down the sides of a continental amphitheater.

These cleared rings were suggestive enough. There was no evidence that less toilsome methods had been used than those adopted by prehistoric man. The trees had been hacked and cut by stone axes, they had been trimmed by stone axes, and we found traces of fire around them, which had been made to hasten their fall. But it was not long before we came upon well-made roads threading the forest, to which the clearings themselves were tributary, and over which the great logs had been transported.

Besides we found dishes and cups, vessels of various sizes, which were well advanced in fictile skill, being watertight, with glazed bodies of white and yellow or terracotta tints. And over them, as on the buckles, were rudely painted and reburned that now familiar symbol of the tree and serpent. These interested us greatly, but our sharpest hunt for some gold relics was unrewarded.

"No lost property worth advertising for 'round here," said Hopkins.

"Well it's still westward," said Goritz. "We must run them down soon. But see how endless the prospect," and he pointed to that unique multitude of motionless trees, falling away and ever downwards into some gigantic central subsidence.

It was remarkable that we encountered no temporary abodes, no camps, no settlements and no laggard or outpost of the elusive people.

The Professor, invincible in theorizing and pertinacious in assertion, animadverted on our discoveries in this way:

"Well, these Radiumites show a sort of frustrated culture. They have some specialized knowledge, and then again they are in other respects primitive. It's a very interesting ethnological problem. It's a well known circumstance that civilizations decline or even degenerate. The modern Indian of Mexico or Peru offers a sad contrast to his ancestors, but in the useful arts, as Tylor remarks, a skill once acquired is seldom or never abandoned or forgotten. If these people could smelt iron they certainly would not resort to stone for felling trees. Races like the New Zealanders have never learned to reduce iron from its ore, though iron ore abounds in their country."

The trails and roads proved to be labyrinthine, and led us over long and useless journeys, frequently back to our starting point. It was Goritz

who solved their apparent confusion and proved that they were parts of intersecting loops or circles, and that each series of circles connected with a succeeding one by roads leading always from the westernmost (or lowest) edge of each circle. These latter roads seemed radial and continuous. The plan was like this (Erickson showed me a drawing) with the circles a mile or half a mile in diameter.

But it was the Professor who detected a remarkable feature which plunged us all into renewed speculations and wondering surmises. In following one of these circular roads he observed that the area enclosed by it was a depression, and this fact, together with a less crowded growth and some previous clearing permitted him to note that an unusually large tree towered among the others, apparently exceeding them greatly in height and, rudely at least, it was at the center of the circular space.

As, at times yielding to a lotos-like influence, we now moved more deliberately, and would remain at one camping spot (this was before Goritz pointed out the more direct line of advance over the radiating roads) twenty or more hours, the Professor would direct his steps to this tree as a landmark. Some abstruse stirrings of suggestion urged him. But it seemed almost a miracle of second sight, for it uncovered an astounding system of combined surveying or charting, associated intricately with religious motives. He diverted our attention indeed to a search which enriched us with some valuable objects, though we were likely to have lost them all later. But it thus led to the *denouement* of an utterly unparalleled adventure by forcing us sharply upon the mysterious people who lived here, and opening up a chapter of incidents and episodes never otherwise related, except in tales of invention or in the dreams of disturbed and romancing minds.

He found his tree in a small, open, carefully cleared space, and on it were not only carvings of the ubiquitous serpent sign, but with this evidently scripts, which he interpreted as prayers, or sacred utterances and adjurations, and, more astonishingly, conventionalized GOLD images (hardly exceeding three or four inches in height) laid at the bottom of the tree. These images rudely symbolized a human figure enrolled in the coils of a serpent.

When he brought one of these images into our camp—he timidly refrained from disturbing the others—you may imagine our excitement. Goritz gazed and gazed at it in a trance of amazement and gloating. He wanted to set out on an excursion of discovery at once. But we overruled that. The Professor had our attention completely. His exploit gave a real authority to his entertaining disquisition. We were thoroughly interested.

"Yes, here is a stupendous theme—Serpent and Tree worship—developed on an unusual scale and in an unprecedented manner. You see this enormous forest is arranged in a chart-like manner into a series—I might say a *Halysites*, as it were—of encircling roadways, producing the effect of a garland of wreathed snakes, while in each fold or embrace, some tree, conspicuous for size or height, or some physical perfection, has been selected, about or around which again the serpentine coils are enwrapped, a splendid combination of tree and serpent worship ideographically presented in a park plan. Again the votive objects attached to the trees form a group of subordinated ornamental commemorative or religious symbols, and the whole display is ancestral, archaic, *turanian*, for Fergusson holds that no Aryan people succumbed to this peculiar cult, dimly shadowed forth in myth, fable and history at the first emergence of racial life.

"Think of the legendary lore connected with the strange prepossessions of early peoples, the myth of Adam and Eve and the Serpent; the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness by Moses, the Serpent of Epidaurus in the temple of Aesculapius, the dragon of the Argonauts, the serpent of the oracle at Delphi, in the grove of laurel trees; the serpent inhabiting a cave at Lanuvium, and wrought into religious practices; the ascription to serpents of healing powers and powers of divination; the snake in Indian, Egyptian, Phoenician, Assyrian religions. Think, Goritz and Erickson, of the tree worship of the Scandinavians, culminating in the *Yggdrasill*, the ash, whose branches spread over the whole world, and even reach up to heaven, the extended and dreadful homage paid to great snakes in America, still existing among the desert Indians of Arizona and New Mexico!

"But as a contribution to the ophitic lore I believe we have found in this new polar continent the central arcana of the mystery referable, for aught we know, to the Adam legend. Gentlemen, we are stepping on the skirts of a great mystery."

The solemnity of this conclusion which was becomingly indicated by the Professor's outstretched hands and by the smile of benignant invitation for us to assume his own gravity, was somewhat abridged or spoiled by Hopkins' interjection.

"I'm afraid, Professor, that we'll be stepping into trouble if we pinch too many of these joints. I say leave the contraptions alone." This was meant as a rebuke to Goritz who was for rifling everything. I half believe he would now have been willing to abandon our further march, hunt for the wood temples, despoil them, and retreat, recover our yacht and hike it over the ice for Point Barrow. The gold had strangely turned his head.

"Yes," I interrupted, for I was really anxious too, though I was willing to join the laugh that followed Hopkins' remonstrance, "we must be careful. There's mystery enough here and there may be power behind the mystery, enough also to send us each about our business to Eternity."

However, from this time we watched for the trees that accentuated the great rings of woods, marked off by the circular and intersecting roads. We detected numbers of them, though for days none would be found. Cleared spaces surrounded them, but not always, nor indeed generally, were there votive offerings of gold images, but bits of apparel, pottery, glass beads (we wondered much over these last), leaden, rudely shaped figures, stone implements and carved wooden masks. We wasted time in this pursuit, urged to it by Goritz's insatiable delight over the gold finds (we resisted his intentions of taking everything away, though he despoiled many of the trees), and I think the Professor was responsible for much of our wandering, for in his note taking he was indefatigable.

The ground continued to descend, and though the decline was interrupted by hillocks, protuberant mounds and long, rising slopes, these exceptions were accidental, and we realized that since entering the forest we had descended nearly three thousand feet. We were actually over five thousand feet below the mean level of the earth. From some of the elevations our view still measured the endless stretch of sombre green (really a blue-green), though we felt certain that a still lower valley bounded its marge and that beyond the latter limit there were hot springs or geysers, the gushing upward of steam clouds was so incessant. And then more wondrously, we were made aware of a shaft of light, a luminous prism shooting upward from the earth, which we began to suspect was

related to the stationary sun from which this puzzling and utterly unrelated nook of the earth received light and heat, when outside of its charmed and storm-beleaguered rim the polar seas and lands lay bound in the iron grip of winter and were dark beneath a sunless sky. Bewildering, maddening paradox! We were often thunderstruck and speechless, dimly doubting whether we had not indeed "shuffled off the coil" of life, and had become reincarnate in another sphere.

I guess that I alone had that feeling often, for Hopkins' imperturbable realism, Goritz's avarice and the Professor's splendid vaulting ambition to convulse the scientific world kept them mortally conscious and human.

And now an amazing thing happened. It began the rush of events that for three or four months tossed us along a course of excitement that made our heads spin and terminated in episodes for all of us too fabulous to be believed and yet—Mr. Link they are the sober, unvarnished truth. You may doubt your ears, you may be tempted—you will be—to put me in a class outside even of the biggest assassins of truth—and as a journalist you have known a good many, but in the end perhaps I can re-establish my reputation by an appeal to your eyes! That sort of evidence cannot be gainsaid.

Well, it turned out that we had nearly crossed the interminable forest, and were tramping silently along one of the radial roads, just after it had cut ("bisected" the Professor insisted) the arc of one of the great circles, when Goritz quickly raised his hand:

"Listen! Music—drums!"

We halted, breathless with wonder. Softly, in a low, monotonous hum came the itinerant beating. Yes, we all heard it, and with it, as we waited, was mingled the metallic clangor of cymbals or something like them.

"'Regardless of grammar they all said "That's them,"'" whispered Hopkins, quoting his Ingoldsby.

"*Up the tree.* They're coming nearer," said Goritz.

"Decidedly," coincided the Professor. "As an exhibition of the prehistoric musical art this will be unique."

We were not long in clambering among the outspread boughs of a big pine, leaving our instruments and packs at its foot (the species in growth and cyclical arrangement of its limbs resembled the white pine), helping each other until we were finally asylumed among the topmost needles, peering out over the receding road for the approaching procession, if procession it was.

We were not to wait long. The music, disentangled now from the interference and dampening effect of the trees, rose assailingly from the distance, and the thumping drums and the dulcet swish and clatter of the cymbals seemed almost beneath us. We were straining our eyes, and, in our impatience and curiosity, became careless of our position, all half standing on the same bough, clasping the trunk and leaning outward.

There was a glittering, swarming effect in the vista, and we saw the advancing ranks of the strangers. Instantly we recognized the Eskimo, or his modified image, in the first companies. They were lurching ponderously forward, their legs and shoulders advancing together to the irresistible rhythm swelling behind them. They wore short yellow tunics or sacks engirdled by cloth belts with leaden buckles; blue trousers caught at the ankles by leaden anklets and sandals completed their dress, except that on their heads they wore broad, white, hive-shaped straw sombreros not unlike the head covering of the peons in Mexico. Each man

swung a short bludgeon comically suggestive of a New York City policeman's club.

"Cheese it—the Cop," chuckled Hopkins.

The ranks came on in goodly number and they formed a stalwart, if clumsy and shuffling phalanx. The band, as a proper misappropriation of the word would describe it, succeeded. These, too, were all of the Eskimo type, but men and women mingled together; the men plied the small, stiff, vociferous wooden drums and the women rather gracefully, and with inerrant precision, smashed the cymbals together.

"Gold—by God," croaked Goritz, and he almost lost his balance in his admiration.

Gold they were indeed, and the metal delivered a note less rasping and shattering than the ordinary brass. The men and women of the band were dressed in closer fitting garments, their legs were naked, but over each of the women's knees was strapped a glittering gold cap and their hair was braided with sinuous gold serpents. They burnished the dark outline of the marchers like gleams of light or fireflies in a summer gloaming. It was really very pretty, and Hopkins nearly lost his self control by starting our applause. The impulse was momentary, for in a trice our eyes were ensnared in the sight of the astonishing crowd of little people that followed them.

They were perhaps larger than the strange little men we had met on the Deer Fels, and their heads did not fall forward with that irksome sense of heaviness which afflicted those diminutive philosophers. But they formed a diverting and animated picture. They were in all sorts of order, and rather prevalently without any order at all. In threes and fours, in strings and lines, in gravely marching little bands, and then in dancing disorder, all wearing tunics and trousers of various colors or plaids, but

with the belt and the hieroglyphic buckle. Every now and then as they surged along they sang, a midget song, quavering and odd, musical in a way, but a rather poor way, and, like the shrilling cymbals and the tom-tom drums, sing-songy and monotonous. We became spell-bound at the weird spectacle. They also wore broad brimmed straw hats, but pushed back on their heads, as if to offset that ludicrous tilt of their funny big heads.

And then came a host of the Eskimo girls beating the cymbals again, but there were no drums or men.

"Well, I must say," softly spoke Hopkins, "the popular chorus girl hasn't anything on these peacherinas, has she?"

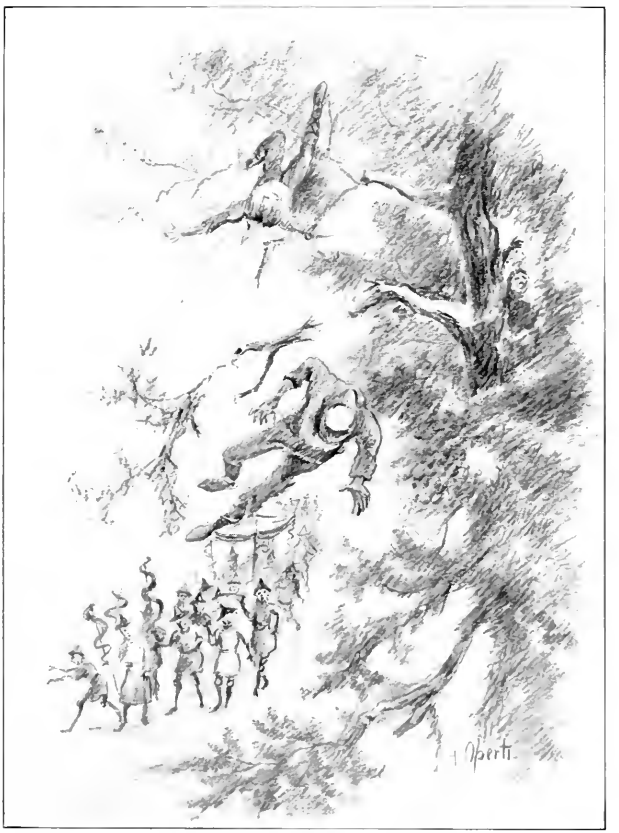
But what was this amazing company that followed—bizarre, fascinating, crudely savage, and yet enigmatically enthralling? A chariot or a flat platform car on low, solid wooden wheels, drawn by goats whose horns were tipped with gold snails, bore a group of diminutive figures which we all recognized as being the very little men whose aeronautics had so astonished us. They and more like them sat back to back on this equipage of gold, as in an Irish jaunting car, and one chariot succeeded another, all loaded down with the *Areopagus* of councilors and governors, for such they certainly seemed to be. But they were sumptuously dressed in violet cassocks, girt with gold; gold chains encircled their necks, and pendent to these was the serpent symbol. On their heads they wore the flat broad brimmed hat bedizened with gold trappings. These hats now lay in their laps, their long-fingered, waxy hands folded over them, and their eyes were protected by the absurd goggles.

They too were singing or praying, the chant rising to us with the undulatory emphasis of a Hebrew cantor, and—so it seemed to me—the words were indeed a Hebrew jargon. But around them,

before them, behind them, stalked an ordered regiment of the slimmer, taller Eskimos; all men, and they each raised on their left shoulders, held stationary by the bent left arm and the right arm extended across the breast, a pole of gold, on which was entrained a living snake. The creatures were imprisoned, for their necks were caught in locks at the apexes of the poles. These snakes were black, a glossy black, and on the glossy, glittering poles they formed a strange *caduceus*. It was in a way a horrible assemblage, and then again, against the background of all of our incredible experiences, it assumed a bewildering charm, as if it were a dream half turned into a nightmare, or a nightmare checked in its course by a remembered dream. On, on, they swayed and moved, and amid these ophidian pages, groups of drummers kept up a ceaseless dull, stupid drubbing.

Then something stranger followed. An empty chair on a gold wagon, a chair itself of gold, but shaped like the stump of a tree with two branches sprouting from it, and between these as they were projected above the stump, the spread figure—in heraldry *displayed*—of the *Crocodilo-Python*, also in gold. The hideous animal enormity was all there, its anaconda-like tail winding about the tree stump, its stilted hind feet grasping the lower ends of the branches, its shorter webbed forefeet dragging their curved ends towards its twisted neck, and the saurian jaws in a horrid rictus, imminent above that empty throne whose occupant perchance might be some aboriginal Apollo or a grinning and revolting savage sibyl.

Well, Mr. Link, the spectacle, with this climax, made us dizzy; some reminiscent weakness from my swooning attacked me, but I would have been safe enough. I stuck fast to the trunk of the tree, when Goritz turning backward stepped on my



MEETING THE RADIUMOPOLITES

support. It cracked, it broke. Hopkins seized Goritz's arm, the Professor Hopkins' coat tail—what there was of it—and ingloriously, with crash and whisking flight from branch to branch, we four hopeless Argonauts slumped from the top of the lofty pine, with arresting scramblings and maniacal clutchings, to the bottom, and were spilled to the roadway; four voiceless, bedraggled, ragged, bushy-haired, wild eyed, grimy men, more savage in our destitution than the savages we had fallen amongst. As we banged to the ground, a jolt stopped the empty throne, with its golden splendors of the distended image of the saurian, directly opposite our jumbled, prostrate bodies.

CHAPTER IX

The Valley of Rasselas

It was an incongruous position, and a mind responsive only to the ludicrous would have been delighted with mirth over it. But it was really no joke, and if Hopkins, whose risibilities were the least easily subdued, had ventured upon one of his whirlwinds of laughter, instead of sedately rising (enjoining us to imitate him) and bowing profoundly, it might have had a tragic termination.

As it was, Hopkins himself actually prescribed our solemn behavior. It somehow appealed just then to his freakish sense of humor to appear portentously grave and decorous, and as he kept up his salaaming we fell in with the trick, and were bobbing away with the gravity of mandarins.

The crowd, as we slammed into the road, were pretty well upset. There was a queer gurgling groan, and then a shout, and a few of the men rushed forward with leveled poles, from which the black squirming ribbons uncannily unrolled, as if to strike us. Our appealing gestures for forbearance disarmed them, and then curiously some of them began to smile. Hopkins' later reflection that we would probably have "made a meal sack split open with diversion," was about correct, and it must have been the preposterous absurdity of it all, conjoined with our indefatigable rolling up and down, and some improvised gesture of the Yankee,

expressive of submission and subjection, that gradually increased their merriment, until we had in front of us a friendly audience, simmering with amusement.

The commotion and noise of the bending, breaking branches had been seen and heard much further along the cortege, and it had caught the eye of the dignitaries on the wheeled platform. In a few minutes a number of these ambling, beetle-like worthies arrived and, withdrawing cautiously into the protecting circle of the Eskimo youth, gazed at us with unaffected astonishment. We now had the best opportunity to see them at short range, and this was so desirable that we brought our antics to a close, reciprocating their scrutiny with as keen an inspection on our part. The impression made on me, on all of us, was favorable.

The faces of these short men were remarkable for an unmistakable gravity; their eyes, from which they had removed the goggles, were penetrating and bright, sunken beneath arched and conspicuous eyebrows, and set alongside of prominent aquiline noses. The lower parts of their faces were weak, narrowed, and clothed with a scanty pointed beard. Their brows were broad, high and of alabaster whiteness. This colorlessness pervaded their whole anatomy, related at it were, to the thinness of their legs, their slim long arms and pendulous fingers, their flat and insufficient feet. We noticed then that they carried in their belts tubes of metal similar or identical to the wand-like ones that had seemed to aid their flight with the balloons.

Their study of us was emphasized by considerable stroking of the beards, shrugging of the shoulders, and an occasional despairing waving of the hands. Everyone, everything, remained motionless while these wiseacres made up their minds as to the meaning of our intrusion, or endeavored to

meet the broader problem of what do to with us. And so the whole mass slowly gathered, the first ranks of the muscular Eskimo older men, the drummers and the cymbalists, the fluttering, diversified groups of the little people; they crushed into the woods, blocked the road, climbed up into the trees; many pressed near to us, their hands resting on their hips, regarding us with a tense and silent absorption that made me nervous.

Hopkins nudged the Professor. "Prof., give 'em a lecture, anything, only hand it over highly flavored—*paprika-like.* Slam a few dictionaries at 'em. What we need just now is a little intellectual standing, I take it. These highbrows think we're no better than we look."

Oddly they had said nothing to us until they noticed Hopkins talking; then one of them, a rather benignant and especially reflective looking individual, who had been arguing vehemently the moment before with one of his colleagues, advanced and said what sounded like "*do bau*" or, had it been in such Hebrew as I myself understood, "*dobare*"; namely "speak," "talk."

The Professor probably did not understand the word, but he understood perfectly their wishes, and under Hopkins' admonition stepped forward, and started a harangue. Nothing that had preceded was so likely to ruin our discretion as the scene made by this overture of the Professor's. Hopkins was compelled to grovel on the ground to suppress his merriment, but this ruse was interpreted fortunately as an expression of reverence for the words or voice of our leader, and his explosions reduced by this means to a subterranean titter were further alleviatingly considered as a phase of weeping.

The Professor was a sight. Not any part of his attire was whole, and his boots were devoid of toes

and rent along the soles. He was dirtier, I think, than any one of us, as his ablutions had been less regular, so far as regularity was the appropriation of an opportunity once a month, and he had been torn and bruised and scratched, and had a most despondent expression of hoodlumism. His hands alone were presentable; I have referred to his sensitiveness over his hands. And his hair! It was a bright red, and it had grown profusely, and, exulting in some untamed inclination to revert to savagery, had grown outward in a stiff jungle that now flamed around his ingratiating physiognomy like some angry halo. Under the stress of his nervousness and—his periods, he flourished his hands and shook his head, and this immensely increased the gap between his grandiloquence and his humiliating appearance. It was side splitting.

And then increasing the ludicrousness of it all almost insufferably, was the close attention of the people, and the absurdly critical demeanor and deliberation of the philosophers. Certainly nobody understood a word of what the Professor said and yet they listened with bent heads, devouring eyes, and a mute satisfaction impossible to describe. And the Professor, flattered or deceived by the thrilling effect he was producing, fired off his lingo at a greater speed, with a screaming voice (he probably thought that if he yelled he would be better understood), and more tumultuous gestures. The combination was more unutterably funny than our predicament was possibly grave. Hopkins was unable to raise his head. I heard him groaning, "Such a bizness. Choke him off." I was compelled to hide my head in my hands and allow my convulsions to go for what they were worth as emotional signals of despair. Goritz, a grave man, lately a fiercely obsessed man, deliberately turned his back and stuck his fingers in his ears.

And this was some of the Professor's sonorous patter:

"My friends, you are amazed to see us, but we have come from the great (hands pressed together) world beyond your continent to find YOU (emphasized by two pointing index fingers). We knew you were here (an ascending shout), and we knew you lived in a world of wonders (miscellaneous flourishes of both hands over his head), and enchantments, scientific miracles (a prolonged *crescendo*) of which we wish to know more. Do not feel astonished at our appearance (an inclusive sweep of the right arm); we have traveled over the polar sea, over mountain ranges, through a desert; we have crossed the steaming chasm that encircles your country (hands and arms in descriptive attitudes, and constantly moving). We have essayed the impossible (another shout), and we have accomplished it (sudden drop into a growling bass); we have," etc., etc., etc., for at least ten minutes, with the people positively hypnotized, so it seemed, by his clamorous chatter.

The absurdity of this address was to us evident enough, and yet it was just the kind of demonstration on our part which impressed them. The Professor's style was valorous and friendly and noisy, and the effect of his rattling appeal was propitious. There would have been real danger for us, I believe now, had they discovered how we had rifled the tree temples. That might have roused their worst hatred and made our position perilous.

Suddenly the benignant looking leader clapped his hands together, and then put one over his mouth, and the Professor wisely took the hint and subsided. There was an animated colloquy begun among the other chiefs and legislators, and we all listened intently, I especially, for it became a stronger and stronger conviction that these digni-

taries spoke a strain of Hebrew, to me not at all understandable, and yet approaching my own Hebrew vocabulary, but masked or distorted by their peculiar nasality and squeakiness.

The discussion grew vehement, and the little doctors attained a degree of excitement that threw them into violent gesticulations, their heads dancing with their vigorous utterances, their beards wagging, and their arms and hands flung around in elucidations that seemed never to convince anyone. Well, the upshot of it all was that an order was given to take us in custody, which we were made to comprehend by very expressive signs, and the order was accompanied by a lot of gracious grimace, deprecatory bowing and apologetic shrugs, whose burden of significance we understood to be that an escort would take us to the conveniences we needed —a bath, renewed clothing, food, rest, shelter, etc.— while the procession would pursue its ceremonial transit, which we very well saw was a state occasion connected with their religion and involving perhaps a long journey consuming weeks for its completion. I wondered whether they would discover our thievery, and felt convinced that if they did our sojourn amongst them would be less pleasant.

After some confusion and distracting running to and fro, all of which had quite a civilized aspect from the self-importance of the little actors, and the typical uncertainty and contradiction of orders, we were finally dispatched with an escort or guard of Eskimo men, led by a chief or captain who had received from the council a budget of directions and injunctions, and who, as Hopkins put it, "had rather *soured on the job*" which would deprive him of the emotional reflexes of the religious revival —surely a sort of vast national picnic.

By this time the spaces around us were jammed tight with people, the little folk and the bulky

Eskimos crowding together and picturesquely intermingled; multitudes were leaping into the trees and climbing out on the branches, so that we were literally in a defile of the strangers, whose drums and cymbals were now silent, and who, passive and almost motionless, gazed at us with a fixed wonder that robbed their faces of all expression.

An incident reminded us forcefully of the strange power of the little rulers over their bulky dependents or subjects, and revived our astonishment at the contents of the metal tubes they carried. These tubes were in the possession of only the "*faculty*," the big headed, diminut ve and rather venerable looking persons who evidently ruled the community and whose disproportionate power probably sprang from the magical qualities of these same tubes.

A tall, morose looking Eskimo had approached us in a threatening manner after having been ordered into the group who were to take charge of us for the mission determined upon by the little chiefs. Something in the half amused inspection Spruce Hopkins made of him, or his own disappointment irritated him, and with a sudden angry cry he sprang out of the ranks, his face distorted with savage fury, and raised the pole or spear he carried to strike Hopkins, when the latter "sidestepped," and the big stick thumped harmlessly on the ground.

Before anyone had time to intervene or calculate the creature's next move, the amiable disputant who had taken so much interest in us nimbly jumped before the man, snatched the tube from his belt, directed it at Hopkins' assailant, pressed its end and sent the fellow sprawling on his back in apparent agony. There was no sign of any discharge, there certainly was no sound, perhaps

there was a momentary gleam of light; we learned afterwards that there must have been. But the moaning ruffian was effectually quailed, and the hush, followed by a low quaver of satisfied subjection from everyone, indicated the supreme power of these physically impotent magicians over their muscular companions.

"If we could hand over a few of those pepper guns to the New York police the gang, thug, and crook fraternities would go out of business pretty quick. Eh?" said Hopkins. "That's slicker than chain lightning."

"A powerful, suddenly produced and concentrated X-ray effect," commented the Professor.

"Goritz," I asked, "where have you put the gold images and trophies? It will probably be best for us to keep them pretty well out of sight."

"Yes I know," returned Goritz. "I've thought of that. They're in my pack, and that won't get out of my hands. Don't worry."

The main mass moved forward. There was a scurrying to and fro, and a downpour of acrobats from the trees. Long after all were out of sight we heard the hum of the drums and dying whir of the cymbals, reaching us through the forest. Then we collided with another detachment, the commissariat, a promiscuous mixture of figures, and with them small flocks of goats. First came platform cars drawn by strong big rams, piled up with what looked like loaves of bread; these were succeeded by the rambling goats and kids leashed in fours and fives, and driven by goatherds of the little people, all wearing the universal tunic and loose trousers; then more cars heaped high with baskets or hampers, and more and more, till Hopkins exultingly declared:

"Well, we shan't starve. I guess we've dropped into a highly developed culture, as you say Prof.,

among a people who realize the foundation principle of enlightened living, a full and diversified bread basket."

Just at the moment I turned and looked up the slope behind us. I caught through a straight vista, almost as if made for my view, the shifting lines of the Eskimos with the gold poles and the black serpents. Somehow the light struck them and they seemed to glitter menacingly.

"Yes! Mr. Hopkins, we have dropped down on a civilization that perhaps is the most ancient on the earth. This segregation of Adamites has developed in this strangely protected seclusion a peculiar knowledge, a knowledge, I am beginning to suspect, only dimly anticipated by the Curies, Ramsays, Rutherfords, Sollys.

They have hit upon some of the properties of matter by which, Mr. Hopkins, one kind of matter becomes another kind, through radio-activity. The prevalence of gold amongst them may be attributable to a mother lode of which I have spoken before, but these mysterious tubes, the radium-like mass in the zinc-blende cave in the Deer Fels, this utterly inexplicable light, hints at deeper secrets. And yet, sir, with this last triumph of scientific power in their grasp they unite an elemental savage worship of snakes and trees, a vestigial trace, sir, of the very first ages. Then it is clear there is a peculiar industrial or politico-economic phase of society conducted on a division principle of fighters, workers and thinkers, a sort of analogue to the formicary and the apiary—the ant and the bees. Yes sir!"

This last word was in recognition of Hopkins' enthusiastic denotement (with extended arms and a loud "*Hurray*," which gathered the Eskimo guard around us in a hurry and in some perplexity; they were relieved when some speaking signs indicated

Hopkins' appreciation of "*grape juice*," pure or fermented), of the last wagons closing the food supply for the peripatetic religious carnival. These were also platform cars on the rudely rounded solid wheels, burnt and charred, of pine tree sections, but on them were huge earthenware casks like the immense vessels found in Peru, and like them ornamented with colored designs; in this case manifold variations, conventionalized and realistic of the Serpent and the Tree. Their contents were unmistakable, for a mere water supply was almost too abundantly found in the innumerable brooks, springs, and deep pools of the Pine Tree forest.

"We're certainly approaching civilization now. As an ultimate evidence of man's enlightenment, quantity and quality of *booze* are complete. The reign of reason and the Dominion of John Barleycorn are simultaneous.

" 'John Barleycorn was a hero bold
Of noble enterprise;
For if you do but taste his blood,
'Twill make your courage rise.
'Twill make a man forget his woes
'Twill brighten all his joy
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing
Tho the tear were in her eye.
Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great posterity
Ne'er fail in Krocker Land.' "

To let the provision annex pass as it lumbered by, while tall drivers of the Eskimo plied long whips whose lashes stung the air with rapid reports, and the straining rams tugged and bolted, we had been compelled to huddle to one side of the road. This outbreak of Hopkins and the Professor's soliloquy

were amazing to our guard at first, but as soon as they half comprehended Hopkins' pleasure and his musical voice sang Burns' apostrophe they became mightily amused, and they beamed on the American with unstinted confidence.

Goritz, who knew some Eskimo from his experience in Greenland, attempted to talk to them, but their answers were unintelligible; neither, I think did they understand him, and it is also certain that they did not converse among themselves in the Semitic phrase peculiar to the little men. There was very little talk of any kind amongst them or us, and after the ebullition when we ran into the wine cart, we relapsed into a resigned silence, enjoying most a study of our guard. Nothing had been taken from us, no search made of our packs, and our guns still remained apparently unnoticed in our hands. The "little doctors" as Hopkins called them had indeed looked at them curiously, and I felt certain they would on their return find out their uses as also the uses of our instruments, the aneroid, thermometers, chronometers, clinometer, artificial horizon, all of which we had regained from their hiding place below the pine tree from whose crown we had so unexpectedly descended.

On, on, on, we tramped; the trees became smaller, more distant, and an open ground appeared before us. In another instant it was succeeded by an even denser growth of younger and greener pine trees; the road turned sharply; it crossed the thick screen; another turn and, like a vision, the central valley of Krocker Land unrolled before us, an endless park, seamed by silver rivers, clothed in emerald meads, tenanted by incalculable flocks, and marbled in its lighting, by an incessant drift of clouds that threw over it a penumbral shade.

That was a marvelous moment, Mr. Link. We were dumb with admiration, and we stood still,

THE VALLEY OF RASSELAS

rooted to the spot, immobile in a transport of amazement. Nothing was said until the Professor half audibly murmured, "The Valley of Rasselas," and the captain of our guard pointing to the glorious picture muttered to himself. Familiar as they were with the scene these unemotional men appreciated our astonishment, and allowed us to measure with our eyes the grand prospect. There was a wayside house near at hand, an adobe structure of red and yellow; beyond it the road dipped, suddenly passing through a hewn gateway in the cliffside which we had reached and which, with varying heights and undulating limits, enclosed like a mammoth parapet the scene of peace and loveliness before us.

To this house we repaired. It was evidently located there as a proscenium box for the contemplation of the ravishing picture. On its porch, most fitly placed, we sat on low benches and attempted to record the details of the view, by our eyes hardly recorded before, so lost had they been in the enveloping, slumbering beauty. The cordiality of our hosts was perfect; we munched spiced *tortillas* and drank from absurd spherical mugs a pleasant, ruby colored wine, a sort of *Tokay*. And this, sir, is what we saw.

It was a flat land over which wandered three separate rivers, fed by the spouting falls that rushed over the cliffside from many points, the gathered waters of all that tracery of streams in the pine forest. Between these rivers spread vast meadows or fields, thickly patched by motionless—so they seemed—herds of sheep and goats Braiding lines or hedges of trees and shrubs parceled the green plains into checkers and, as the eye passed outward, these hedges, massing themselves in perspective, banked the horizon with a continuous wood. And there was a floating colorfulness in the

picture besides, a roseate-blueness, that we later discovered came from an abundant wild flower like our iris which nestled over acres of land in the wetter spots. And far, far away with a spectral splendor rose into heaven shafts, or one monstrous shaft, of light. It glowed and pulsated, changing from an opalescent pearliness to the hardened glint of steel, anon streaked with bluish ribbons like a spectrum. Nothing could be more wonderful.

Playing against it rose what seemed a volley from steaming cauldrons, folded, unfolded, and drifting. Following this magnificent radiation into the sky it was lost in a wide halo or pond or lake of strangely scintillating light; an overspread roof of light it seemed, forming that stationary sun, that from end to end, from side to side of this polar bowl lit its manifold circumferential areas. Thither our fascinated eyes rose, and then it became manifest that the overflowing permeating glory of this scene resided in the play of this light, apparently forever veiled by nets and skeins and shifting aureoles of clouds, that somehow formed a floor beneath it, so that its emergent rays, as in our sunsets or sun risings, shot outward, coronal-like, and as they encountered the perpetual play of clouds and vapors as perpetually painted them in colors. A superb and marvelous meteorology, for this Valley of Rasselas thus remained, for long periods perhaps, bathed in the beauty of a royal sunrise or a royal sunset.

This screening from the downpour of the light of the stationary sun was certainly a beneficent provision, for while there might elapse periods when its unchecked blaze smote the valley, the harsh ordeal of enduring it was constantly intermitted. It was clear too that the rainfall was excessive, both here and in the pine forest we had traversed; that this navel of the world was a watery kingdom.

Even as we gazed the pageant of the sky mysteriously changed, and with its changes the complexion of the picture earthward underwent delicate transmutations too. From gay to sombre, from a wide refulgence to a twilight grayness, from a flecked radiance to the transient darkness of clotted clouds, from a burning splendor of illumination, by which things lost their definition, and the dazzling excess of light blotted out details, to half light, whereby a clearness of outlines developed, allowing us to measure the distance, and to pick out house and tree, bush, stream and rolling mead. We were enraptured by reason of this protean aspect, and watched and, still lingering, gazed, unsatisfied.

The Eskimo men understood our delight and it brought on their rather apathetic faces a smiling approval. They chattered and gesticulated and surrendered themselves to a renewed appreciation of this age-old cradle, in which they had grown and lived, strangely associated with the older race, perhaps of some Semitic stock, strangely altered from their rude forebears and separated more strangely still with their associates from the thronging world of men outside of this entrancing cell of earth, and yet bearing the impress of traditions which that outer world had created. How could it be explained? Here was the new and crowning marvel of the centuries—Krocker Land!

A floating tree trunk had indicated to Columbus the vast unknown of the western continent and the scattered prognostications of geographers had led his scientific thought steadily forward to its prediction and—it was found. A mountain's darkness brushing the horizon had crossed his vision as Admiral Peary looked westward through his glass, and betokened yet untrod tracts of earth; the vagaries of the tides submitted to scientific computation had proven to Harris their positive existence,

and now to us, four froward, unknown men, it was vouchsafed to establish in facts these symptomatic guesses.

But our discovery was enriched by unsuspected marvels; this immense polar depression, like a dent in the crust of the earth, the peculiar succession of dropping zones, their physiographic contrasts, the stupendous circular—so we supposed—rift which framed them, its igneous depths, that incessant uppouring of steam devising a curtain of cloud around this screened continent, the perpetual chain of changes in the precipitation of the condensed vapors renewed again by evaporation, the survival of saurian life, the meteorological perplexities introduced, the bewildering fact of an ethnic evolution in these small people, their peculiar association with a dependent Eskimo race, the suggestion of Adamic traces, the apparent control over advanced chemical agencies, this indigenous tree and serpent worship hinting at ancestral influences lost in the shadows of the very beginning, and then, more incredible than the wildest dreams of fiction, this impossible stationary sun, sustaining this little segregated world, feeding it with light and heat, an unimaginable oasis in the incalculable desert of Arctic snows and ice. WHAT WAS IT? Upon what miracle of matter were we advancing?

I was lost in such reflexions when an exclamation from the Eskimo—sounding like *ibbley*—and a hand clapped on my shoulder straightened me into attention. The pool of clouds over the valley whose inconstant movement alternately veiled and revealed the light beyond them, had parted, as though a sudden wind had pierced it and driven its parts in rapid and eccentric flight to all sides, as a stone dropped in a pond sends the waves shoreward, and, past the rift, we saw through the rising vapors, beyond the rigid, fan shaped prism yet involved in

it, an incandescent surface like a mammoth shield, a shield covering acres of space, and over it again, and yet perhaps miles and miles further away, the solemn grandeur of an ice capped lofty mountain.

It was a glimpse only; an instant later the refluent clouds had flung themselves together again, in the ceaseless to and fro, and, as I thought, rotary motion, that conveyed such a changeable expression to that peaceful hidden vale.

That glimpse, Mr. Link, is the memory of a lifetime, it was a picture so inwrought with the occasion and my own feelings as to remain with me a deathless vision.

"I suppose this extraordinary *pseudo-sun*," said the Professor after some moments' silence "is the most astounding thing we have seen. It is certainly unaccountable. Its power to illuminate, warm and enliven this little continent within the circle of the Perpetual Nimbus surpasses comprehension. On what theory of physics—for of course it is not an extra-terrestrial phenomenon—can it be accounted for?"

"How about this Radium. There's light and heat in that isn't there?" asked Hopkins.

"Of course, as we know it in its bromide salt. But the radium couldn't be a fixed object in the sky, and, if on the earth, what fixes its rays or converges them on one spot, and what is the radiant material of that spot itself?"

"I have been thinking," said Goritz, standing up, while our Eskimo escort gathered around us, and listened with a gravity that half persuaded me they understood us, "I have been thinking that there is a vortex of dust up there in that nebulous mass, that heat and light reach it from some terrestrial source and are again reflected earthward. Would that meet the problem?"

"Perhaps," assented the Professor, and even as

he spoke the light everywhere about us diminished, so that the valley became hidden in a most dismal half light, and then that feeble illumination vanished, and we were literally plunged in darkness. Waning of the light, amounting sometimes almost to extinction, and lasting for some hours, had been constantly observed by us on our journey from the coast, but nothing so complete as this. We were pretty well astonished, and remained silent, expecting some novel demonstration, for now we had become so convinced of our immersion in a sea of Sinbad-like adventure, that we were not only prepared but almost impatient for still newer and newer and stranger happenings.

The Eskimos were as silent as ourselves, but when in perhaps half an hour the light revealed itself again in the sky, as spluttering radiations, somewhat like the splattering of sparks about a slowly reconstructed arc light, and then became continuous, and then gradually swelled to its original intensity, and the valley once more glowed under our eyes, they began singing. It seemed to be some hymn or religious chant and we connected it at once with superstitious feeling over the removal and renewal of the light.

It was a wearisome iterative sing-song drone, rising and falling in pitch, and sometimes deriving a rhythmical accent from the clapping of their hands. The voices were not unmusical, and there was enough vocality in the words to even elicit an approach to charm. When later we heard this same song sung by thousands, its reinforced effectiveness produced a positive spell.

It was time to proceed; our guard evidently thought so. The captain shook us each by the arm, pointed down the road, and we tramped away, watched eagerly by the few inmates of this roadside house—a man, his wife, and three rabbit-eyed,

almost naked kids. The road passed through a gateway of stone, hewn in the cliffs, and with a moderate grade conducted us some ten hundred feet in vertical descent, into the Valley of Rasselas.

It was the last step on our long journey, the goal of dreams had been reached, Krocker Land was discovered, and now the revelation was to be crowned by a closing and incalculable drama.

CHAPTER X

Radiumopolis

There had been noticeable for some time a change in temperature It grew colder and the recurrent periods of darkness were more frequent. It almost seemed as if the stationary sun responded to the secular changes produced by the apparent motion of the firmamental sun, and that, while light remained, a reduced form of winter might still be expected in this oddly conditioned corner of the earth.

Already in some way the rumor of our approach had spread far and wide. The fields were at first crossed by solitary figures trooping to the roadside to see the strangers. These were shepherds of the great flocks of goats and sheep, whose slowly shifting masses drifted over the meadow in irregular blotches of white and brown and black. At times, where we crossed marshy exposures on either side of us, the gurgle of chattering water fowl reached us, and then when we attained a higher ground hosts of red and blue iris-like plants clothed the edges of the fields, from whose corollas rose, like a visible incense, innumerable white and yellow moths or butterflies. It all was transcendently novel and interesting, and though occasionally we shivered when some chilliness entered the air, from passing breezes flung into the valley from the vast cold outside, we almost forgot our discomfort in our excitement and enthrallment.

The spectators along the route became more numerous, a wide-eyed, open mouthed throng, at first scarcely vocal, just an amused, staring audience. They were made up of the larger serving, working class—those I have designated as Eskimos—and they hung over each other's shoulders in mute astonishment, their black eyes sharply scrutinizing us, and very often their fingers pushed out in expressive glee at the Professor, whose superb shabbiness and challenging splendor of hair always evoked the liveliest pleasure.

But as we advanced, mile upon mile, over a road of perfect construction—evenly arched and well ditched on both sides—we observed a changing character in our audience. The little people were thronging in. They came from distant low villages and they imparted a contrasted demeanor to the wayside. They were mildly clamorous and critical. They broke into ejaculations, hallooed salutations, and extended comments which kept them amused and vibrating with curiosity. A few sombre older people remained silent or grunted a few monosyllables to each other, but the younger element was quite irrepressible. At one place where the road crossed a village community, the guards had to become rigorous in maintaining an open path for us, and into large trees—a tree that here resembled the top-heavy Pawlonia of Asia—urchins nimble as monkeys had climbed in clusters, and dropped on us nuts and grain and leaves.

"Well the kids have the right spirit. I feel more at home now when the *enfant terrible* shows up. Where the youngsters have a sense of fun it seems to me the fathers won't have gotten so far beyond it, as to serve us up in an imperial banquet, cut off our heads as intruders, or feed us to the Crocodilo-Python," said Hopkins to me who was just alongside of him. "I'm half afraid they've taken a

shine to us, and will have us up in some municipal museum for the education of the public. I feel anxious about the Professor. They surely think he's a most attractive wild beast."

And now we were trudging through a farm land; agricultural acres expanded before and around us; the bean, wheat, rye; the grape, apple, cherry; clover fields and honey hives were in evidence, though the harvesting—far later than in the south, a singular inversion again proceeding from the influence of the stationary sun—had been completed. The red and yellow houses of adobe tile or brick were gathered in small clusters and when, over long distances they sprinkled the tawny or sear landscape with patches of bright color, like bits of new cloth on a worn gown, the effect was delightful.

Our spirits rose; although prisoners over whom no doubt some national parley or pow-wow would be seriously held, and although distrustful of the obsequious gestures (most decidedly so in my case) with which the "little doctors" had invited us to return with the guard to the *somewhere* we must be now approaching, still the winning charm of the land, the agreeable manners of the little people, and the stolid unconcern of the larger race half convinced me that our fate wouldn't be a tragic one. Our most ominous thoughts were connected with those dreadful metal tubes!

I took occasion to study the people. The larger serving or inferior class were Mongolian in type; they resembled a taller, more slender and less intelligent Eskimo norm, but the little people presented a surprising range of individual variation. The tallest of these latter were almost four feet in height, the smallest scarcely exceeded three. Literally they were a boreal pygmy race. The dominating peculiarity among them was a ten-

dency to macrocephalism which in the "little doctors" became exaggerated, and made them overbalanced and grotesque. In many the heads did not too obviously exceed a normal size, and the lower limbs were almost normally developed, giving them shapeliness. The women were very strikingly less afflicted with "big-headedness," and in them too the nose, attaining among the men a preponderant magnitude was much more moderate in size. Many of the young women were very pretty, a few almost beautiful, and the becoming attire of the tunic, the loose trousers bound, in many instances, with gold anklets, the abundant black hair coiled up in coronal chignons, and sinuously decorated with the gold serpent-shaped pins, administered a piquant loveliness. Generally the men were not so attractive; an unpleasant lankiness of limb, and (because of a deficient dental development) sunken cheeks, with narrow chests, and their unusual heads, on which too in a great number of cases an extreme scantiness of hair was observable, robbed them of physical rhythm and proportion. But again among them were also striking exceptions, and these gained immensely in comeliness from the average homeliness of their associates. The older men universally affected beards, which some compensatory whim in nature made abundant. All were dark.

My greatest achievement in observation on this long march was the certain identification of the language with a Semitic tongue, and the detection among the taller people of an Eskimo dialect. This last discovery was made by the help of Goritz, whose knowledge of the eastern Eskimo dialects was extensive, although he at first questioned my conclusions. The reasons are philological and I pass over them. I hope to discuss the matter before the congress of Americanists, to be held in

Philadelphia next year. It is enough for the following chapters of my narrative to say that I became proficient (reasonably so) through my intimate acquaintance with Hebrew, with the speech of the "little doctors," and Goritz acquired a less facile mastery of the Eskimo tongue. The recognition of corruption in sound of a few consonants and a peculiar ellipsis of some vowels, in the first case, accomplished the feat for myself. When I told Hopkins of my success he was overjoyed.

"Alfred, that is dandy. If we can tell what they're talking about, and get a line on their plans we'll skin through all right. When the proper moment comes let 'em know you're wise to their gibberish, and they'll take water quick enough. Why, we might start a revolution, if they try to put it over us. The big fellows could sweep them like chaff—and then our GUNS."

"Yes," I curtly interjected. "And their tubes?" Spruce was silent.

We had now been five days on our march and our progress had been alternately hastened and retarded by the curiosity of the people. Hastened when messages from nearby villages along the road came to our captain urging speed, that the citizens of these country communities might inspect us a little longer; retarded by reason of this same importunity to allow the gathering countryside the gratification of the show. For literally we had become that, and had there been an enterprising manager to exploit our novelty his receipts would have been enviable. The crowds increased, the rumor of our approach spread on every side, and to meet their unappeasable wonder over our appearance we were stuck up on platforms in the squares or open places in the villages and watched, studied and applauded by the insatiable throngs. It was indeed a stupifying experience. Certainly it was

abundantly ludicrous and amusing as well. Hopkins of course enjoyed it. Goritz was patient and obscurely piqued by it, the Professor regarded it as ethnologically delightful, and I took advantage of the display to note the people and their speech.

"I have served a good many purposes in my life," said Hopkins, "but I never supposed I'd make a drawing card in a traveling circus. Our united effect is really gorgeous. I should think they might improve the show by some fresh clothes. But say—the Professor is immense. And he TAKES. The way they shout and rubberneck to get nearer to him will start something doing. If the Professor only had a little political ambition and an ounce of sense he'd organize a campaign that would land him in the presidential chair. And then! Well then we'd all be prime ministers, and hand out the dope to these babies in a manner so impressive that we'd hold the job down tight, until we could get away with the loot. We'd make Goritz treasurer and he'd come the Tammany act on 'em so strong that maybe we could leave with all the goods worth having in the country, in our jeans. Eh?

"Look at 'em, now, surveying the Professor. I feel an artistic jealousy of that red hair of his. It certainly has 'em guessing. Perhaps they think it's a kind of halo, always on fire. He certainly must keep it on his head. It's our salvation. Let the local barbers touch that, and find out it's just plain scissorable wool, and we're in the soup—and the Professor? Well, they won't do a thing to him."

This fifth day turned out to be the last one of our march. A memorable day it was. Larger and larger grew the crowds; they met us, streaming along evidently from some near point of population, and, as now the captain of our guard would allow

no delay or halt, we assumed that our destination was almost at hand. Attaining it formed a new thrill.

We had come to a marked irregularity in the topographic monotony of the valley, a high, evenly sloped ridge curving away on either side, which might be the arc of a continuous or completed circle, or just a natural accident. The broad road ascended this hill. We had just stepped out on the summit, when one of the intermittent light flashes or sunbursts blazed on the strange scene before our eyes. We were looking into a dish-like area, for such it seemed, as we could trace north and south the circumvallation of the ridge, and it was filled with settlements which became denser in the distance, and in that distance (later we discovered it was about the center of the circular enclosure) rose the dazzling pediments, stories and wings, of a GOLD HOUSE.

Nothing could be more astonishing. Instinctively we came to a full stop and gazed. And our companions, familiar with the spectacle, were arrested by the sudden apocalyptic flashing of light from the burnished building, as "of summer lightning on a dark night suddenly exposing unsuspected realms of fantastic and poetical suggestion." (A line, Mr. Link, I found last night in a book by George Saintsbury.) But the suggestions here were overwhelmingly fantastic.

Imagine a swelling mound tapering to a narrow platform, itself created by the leveling art of the engineers, surmounted by a curiously heaped up succession of stories, which were buttressed below by extensions and porticoes, and frescoed or incrusted throughout by rude and hieratic ornamentation—an ornamentation that certainly had more lucidity than the confused medley of symbol and ideograph at Copan, but which had not yet

freed itself from a mixture of extravagance and realism. Then finally imagine this executed in what seemed to be pure gold, and all glittering in a quick concentration of light. It was refulgent and it was unearthly. Below it spread the dull tawniness of an outreaching terracotta city.

"What have we come to?" faltered Goritz, who was transfixed by this new wonder.

"It might be called," said Hopkins, "the Desire of All Nations; at least it would look that way to a thoroughbred anywhere inside of Christendom. I wonder how long that pile would stand on the principal street of the capitals of the world! The army, with fixed bayonets, shot guns, and dynamite bombs, couldn't keep the gentlemen of America or the spend-thrifts of Europe from getting their hooks in somewhere. I think it must be the Casino; nothing short of Policy or Poker could keep up an establishment like that. Gold must be very cheap hereabouts, or else the people need a little free schooling as to the particular and pleasant uses it can be put to. Looks that way."

"Ah," spoke up the Professor. "Barter, primal conditions, prevail here, where a medium of exchange is hardly needed. Gold to these people is a color, an ornament. With it they have no more than without it, for every desire is satisfied, and the pride of possession or the sentiment of avarice is unknown. All are equally happy, and all are equally rich or poor. Gold has an interest to them because it pleases the eye, and it is here dedicated to personal or religious distinctions, but as *wealth*, in our sense, it has no value. These flocks, these acres of grain and fruits, mean subsistence, but GOLD is something to look at—simply. Its name here has probably no meaning of commercial utility."

"Pretty good for the eyes though, Professor,"

was Hopkins' rejoinder, "and as for the name I don't recall anything

> Which acts so direct, and with so much effect
> On the human sensorium, or makes one erect
> One's ears so, as soon as the sound we detect,

unless perhaps—it might be—BEER—in a drought."

"Well," in an undertone from Goritz, "if Gold has no practical uses in this outlandish nook of the world, we can take enough of it away with us to a place where it's more useful than ornamental."

"Have a care," warned Hopkins. "Our heads had better be kept on our shoulders, too. Remember, Goritz, you've considerable loot in your pack now. If they give us the third degree, and start in on a customs house search, we may get to another place where—where Gold wouldn't be worth the handling, because of the heat, or otherwise, or because our immediate necessities were otherwise provided for."

All this while we were again rapidly moving on, and with each step, while the marvel before us grew larger, plainer, some of its first surprising effectiveness changed. It began to be seen that it was little more than a piled up structure of the communal dwellings which dotted the plain beneath it, but on it a queer aboriginal fancy had stuck plates of gold,—or what seemed to be gold—and that its corners were decorated with upraised standards of gold delineating the patron god, or demon, of the establishment, the Crocodilo-Python. Over it too in whirls and corkscrew spirals spread innumerable folded scrolls and winding figures whose lumpy extremities betokened the heads of snakes. It was not long before we had gained the heart of the city. Everywhere it had been a monotonous series of the tile huts, stuck in

tiers, one series over another, such as description and photographs have made so familiar from the Arizona and New Mexico region. There was now a much smaller admixture of the taller people, and the little men and women appeared to be almost the only occupants of the city.

We had come almost underneath the pimple-like excrescence on which the golden habitation sat, like a yellow corolla on the green bulb of a thistle, and we found a space surrounding it of about a thousand feet in width, filled with enclosures holding, to our amazement, large black snakes, the congeners exactly of those held aloft, in the procession we had met, on golden rods. The walls of these enclosures were of tile or rudely baked bricks; some were screened with an open wicker work, which in many instances had become dilapidated or were quite worthless as fences to prevent the egress of the snakes. In the enclosure bushes and weedy herbs flourished, and their occupants hung from the branches of these or torpidly lay in the grass beneath, in repulsive bunches. I admit my unreasonable aversion to snakes, and these extraordinary protected nurseries overcame me with disgust. Hopkins was hardly less disturbed. To the Professor and to Goritz they were manifestly attractive.

"St. Patrick can't be the patron saint here," said Hopkins, "and whatever language they speak it pretty certainly is not Irish. I think no one could mistake their brogue for anything heard in Cork or Dublin. As for the snakes, I guess what Bobbie Burns said to the louse will fit them,

'Ye ugly creepin, blastit wonners,
Detested, shunn'd by saunt and sinners.' "

"Every step we take," solemnly rejoined the Professor, "discloses new wonders. To me it is quite

evident that the trail of the ethnic origins of Tree and Serpent worship crosses the pole!"

"Yes," shouted Hopkins, "and to me, it's quite evident that the trail of these reptiles crosses ours. Look out there!"

He pointed ahead and over the road stretched the wriggling bodies of twenty or thirty faintly spotted black snakes, sleek and graceful, their heads raised indifferently in a cool inspection of our approach, and their tongues quivering in defiance.

As soon as they were perceived by our guard, the leader raised his hand, and we waited for their ophidian majesties to satisfy their curiosity, and pass on, which they did, swaying the cropped grass on the wayside and vanishing into one of the neighboring pounds over its loosened dejected blocks. It was quite clear that the city of Radium-opolis—so we came to distinguish it later—might prove unpleasantly full of these creatures, for whom the citizens maintained a most disagreeably pious regard. It reminded the Professor of the great center of Serpent Worship at Epidaurus, where stood the famous temple to Aesculapius and the grove attached to it in which serpents were kept and fed, down to the time of Pausanius.

Once over the peripheral plain we began the ascent of the mound at its center. There was a simple stateliness about this terraced rise of steps, formed of a red tile or brick, from its very gradual recession and its extreme width. Here our eyes measured and studied the astonishing house, or temple, or Capitol, which was to be for us doubtless a "house of detention" also.

It was a square composite, with openings on three sides—those we could see—and pierced by window embrasures, sensibly regular in their spacing. Porches extended outward from the openings and on these a little rather unsuccessful decorative con-

struction had been expended. Over each porch entrance was the literal reproduction in gold and in stucco of the local deity, in addition to the upraised images—careening and expanded like hippogriffs—at the four corners of the building. These latter were made entirely of gold, and represented thousands and thousands of dollars. It was indeed stupifying to estimate their probable value.

The gold surface of the Capitol proved to be a plaster ng of gold plates, not so well or so carefully executed as to preclude the constant exposure of the underlying adobe. But this prodigious prodigality of gold was again most incredible.

We were conducted at once into the *Acropolis* so the Professor styled it—noting before we entered a serviceable courtyard around it, which secured a little dignity from a wall of bricks interrupted by higher pillars, and also rimmed with gold. Entering a broad hallway we were overcome by the pervasive softly emitted radiance from lamps of mineral on clumsy stands, and held on round gold saucers or servers.

"Radium," said the Professor. "It is exactly as I have been suspecting. These people have gained access to some vast deposit of this miracle-working element. It not unreasonably may be supposed that it is exposed in some chasm in the crust of the earth, entering to great depths, and perhaps impinging on such central masses as have been interpolated in some recent physical speculations, as giving rise to the *static* heat of the earth. Here we probably have an explanation of the abundance of gold—*transmutation!* And here too some adequate explanation of the stationary sun rays converted by reflection into light and heat—Astounding! Astounding!! Astounding!!!"

To me the fascination, in a way, of all this mixture of wonders and horrors (the snake and later

discoveries and episodes) and primal simplicity, was just that incalculable oddness or mystery of the conjunction of some almost superhuman power with the weird religion and the archaic habits. I cannot describe how perversely it affected me, sometimes raising my interest to a fever heat, and again filling me with a tormenting fury of desire to make my escape.

We passed through the hall, our guard, at some gesture from the captain, closing around, and as we emerged at its further end, again upon the outside court, I, looking back, saw attendants cover the radium masses with opaque caps. We were now in a somewhat contrasted entourage. On this side of the Capitol the city seemed excluded, and a rather thick wood and an untamed undergrowth, through which however stretched a broad highway, monopolized the ground westward. We had entered both the city and the Capitol from the east. In an adjoining yard at the foot of another symmetrically disposed terrace of steps was a closed tenement, and into this we were led.

Imagine our delight to find it occupied by an immense basin or pool, into which two conduits poured hot and cold water. The immense bath was even then gently steaming; the outer air had grown increasingly colder. Rough masonry couches, covered with rugs, had been built against the walls, and on the edge of the huge tank were scattered white chunks which, at first conceived to be soap, turned out to be an indifferent substitute, in the shape of an unctuous and gritty clay.

This delightful prospect almost brought shouts to our lips, and Hopkins raising his hands in mock homage and gratitude, exclaimed:

"But this day of water, cleanliness, and soap,
I shall carry to the Catacombs of Hope,

Photographically lined
On the tablets of my mind,
When a yesterday seems to me remote."

And to crown all we were given the tunic and trousers of Radiumopolis with the belt and enigmatically engraved buckle—of lead, to Goritz's ill-suppressed mortification. And then we were taken back into the Capitol, and alloted four rooms facing the east, each provided with a window, from which we would now surely be able to watch the pageant of the returning worshippers, priests or celebrants. These rooms deserve a passing consideration. They were low ceilinged, moderate spaced, their floors carpeted with a rude figured matting (again the conventional Crocodilo-Python) their walls hung with rugs far less artistic than the Navajo blanket, low couches upholstered with matting and rugs or carpets, and across the doorway a surprisingly artistic tapestry of gold threads, figuring the Crocodilo-Python in a maze of interlacing and sinuous outlines, something like the convoluted sea dragon on the jade screens of China. One of these curtains hung at the entrance of almost every room in the Capitol, and they were very numerous and capable of accommodating a remarkable number of people.

There were on the ground floor—where our own rooms had auspiciously been reserved—large assembly rooms, or audience and council chambers, and, as the sequel shows, one of these was the Throne Room. There was no glass covering to the windows; perhaps in a few instance screens of leather, which were inserted in the openings of the rooms, helped to exclude the cold, such as it was. Rain was kept out by board frames. We found out that there was seldom a cold exceeding 0° Centigrade, and that radium stoves or our clothing itself, mitigated any severity of weather the denizens of

these houses experienced. Everything reinforced our first impressions, that the culture of the Radiumopolites was simple, unostentatious, a little grotesque and savage, but that their proximity to some source of radium had evolved a mysterious power among their wise men, which had overlaid the *supellex* of their culture with this resplendent glory of GOLD. Was it, as the Professor more and more confidently believed—was it *transmutation*?

In our rooms we were supplied with the radium lamps and were made to understand that too long exposure to their influence was dangerous. Once in possession of this marvel we surrendered almost all curiosity to the inspection of the transcendent material. Facts connected with its properties and its power are considered in another place; our immediate history in our new surroundings claims precedence now. We were permitted the liberty of the courtyard around the Capitol, but were not allowed to descend the hill, nor to investigate the surrounding city. Of course we saw the occupants of the Capitol, who evidently formed a restricted and semi-imperial class, and the many messengers, tradespeople or supplicants who every day came out of the city.

The small people were immensely the more interesting of the two types. They varied much among themselves, and exhibited individualities of temperament, behavior and feature, that were most absorbing. One defect amongst them was the imperfect and incomplete teeth, especially in the men, the apparently thin-shanked (*platynemic*) legs, and the somewhat constricted chests, indications, taken in connection with their large heads, that the Professor interpreted as evidence of great racial age. The women were often sharply contrasted with the men, being larger,

more shapely, and often boasting really extraordinary beauty. This was most marked in the residents in the Capitol, and one of these ladies of the Capitol whom we later encountered promenading the courtyard quite enthralled us. Her own appreciation of the Yankee was on her side equally enthusiastic.

We had our meals served to us a in a separate room, attended by servants of the larger race. We sat at a table covered with a yellow cloth, with designs woven upon it of the ubiquitous Crocodilo-Python, and we ate from square dishes of pottery, also yellow and bordered by blue traceries of interwoven serpents, which revolted both Hopkins and myself. Our cuisine was not much varied, and the most pleasing element was the delicious wine. The flat meal cakes, nuts, fruit and dishes of goat and sheep meat, with some vegetables, were offered relentlessly day after day, and it occurred to Hopkins that if he could have had an assorted shipment from Park and Tilford's, and been allowed to make a few simple experiments in the kitchen he could easily have raised the standard of living immensely.

But I was making remarkable progress in acquiring the tongue of the upper classes. My excellent knowledge of Hebrew made this practicable, and in a short time, before the return of the Councilors, Priests or Governors from their peripatetic religious pilgrimage made it supremely helpful, I could actually converse intelligibly, and from carefully enunciated addresses understand my interlocutor. I was most lucky in hitting on a very sympathetic teacher. It was no less a one than Ziliah, the daughter of Javan, the president of the Council and Ruler of the Capitol. He was the benignant and expostulating little gentleman we had encountered when our mishap precipitated us from the pine tree top. She, his daughter, was certainly the fairest of the children of Radium-

opolis, and her wandering and liquid eyes had never been more satisfied than they were now with the sweet boyish beauty of Spruce Hopkins, the Yankee.

Ziliah Lamech—if I may adopt the Gentile practices of nomenclature—was one of the larger women, and exhibited a different and piquant skill in dress. Her trousers were rather baggy, her skirts looped on the sides, so that her pretty feet in embroidered goatskin sandals were delightfully visible. The belt of gold plates and the wonderful buckle of gold clasped her waist, constricting the blowsy upper tunic, which was a delicate blue, and enriched by interwoven threads of gold. It was loosened at her neck and the dark, smooth skin bared at her finely shaped neck, was decorated by a series of delicate gold chains in a composite flat necklace. Her abundant hair, as with the women we had met in the pine forest, was made up in compact rolls, that were held in place by the gold serpent pins, and from her small ears hung tiny bells of gold.

Her face, as I carefully studied it, was distinctly Jewish. The features were really perfect, and the mingled softness and intelligence of her expression, the half denoted charm of extreme sensibility in her eyes, the mobility and loveliness of her mouth, a swaying grace in her motions, an indefinable distinction too in the carriage of her head, and the enticing fullness of her bared arms—the sleeves of her upper garment were caught up to her shoulders by broad loops of ornamented gold—combined to make of her a captivating and most novel picture. She it was, whose heart the errant little god Cupid had now sadly transfixed with his stinging arrows, and her heart was beating wildly under the loosened folds of her jacket with love for the blond American.

It was my opportunity. Love is a quick teacher, and makes quick confidences, especially with naive

and unsophisticated natures, as now, in this little princess of the north. She met us frequently in the courtyard surrounding the huge glittering Capitol where we were constantly strolling, and I recall the extraordinary picture she made, when one of the black lustrous snakes rose from the parapet on the edge of the hill as she was passing. She bowed to us, seized the reptile, wound it around her body, and lifted, above her own, its big wedge-shaped head, with one hand, holding with the other its scaly loops at her waist. The effort brought color to her cheeks, excitement to her eyes, and though neither Hopkins nor myself admired the combination, her beauty won from the fantastic, or repellent, contrast a most singular thrall.

There was a maidenly coquetry with her, as became her degree, for she retired after disengaging the creature, throwing it back down the hillside, whence it sped to the immense preserve below reserved for these unpleasing guests. The ophidian impress everywhere was to me almost unbearable. These snakes traveled from their enclosures, more or less frequently, in all directions; they were numerous in the city, though, and, after their secretive habits, were discovered most unalluringly in corners, eaves, holes, roofs, hanging from trees, or nestled on clothes. In the Capitol or Palace they were not so common, and probably were never found above the first floor.

Hopkins of course realized his conquest, but Hopkins decidedly abhorred snakes. When the beautiful Ziliah vanished, he said with a most comical grimace:

"A married life with a snake lady wouldn't be much better than a lifelong companionship with a gin mill," an ungallant commentary which I denounced.

Ziliah and I loitered long together until under her

adroit tutelage I became almost proficient in this unquestionably deteriorated Hebrew tongue. And then, when we fairly understood each other—how the questions flew! She exulted in telling me all she knew about her people, and the exchange on my part, in telling her of our origin and home, with welcome dilations on the talent and prowess of the adorable Spruce, only too well repaid her efforts. I told all these things to my friends, and for long hours we would discuss and rehearse them with increasing amazement. In conjunction with all that I learned later, the picture to be presented of Radiumopolis, the Radiumopolites, and their country—KROCKER LAND—is mainly as follows:

The Valley of Rasselas lies to the southwest of the Krocker Land terrain, and the city of Radiumopolis to the southwestern corner of the valley itself. They are excentrically related to the vast domain of encircling mountains, and to the stupendous gorge of the Perpetual Nimbus, which seems throughout its extent to penetrate to uncooled or igneous wombs of the earth. But at one point westward there is a superimposed gorge that actually cuts the first encircling monstrous crack, and through this secondary gorge, cutting the first to immense depths, pours the deluge of the waters of the river that empties the Saurian Sea into the Canon of Promise. (See Chapter VI.) This great river enters the Valley of Rasselas towards the northwest, and after a short, peaceful transit, as a brimming flood through wide savannahs, it turns abruptly westward in an entrenched conduit and resumes its terrible course through the canon I named the Canon of Escape. Through this awful defile and on the surging flood of that river I made my own exit from Krocker Land, reached Beaufort Sea, Behring Straits, and finally San Francisco. Goritz's appelation for the gorge beyond the Sau-

rian Sea is, however, justified because of the river's final, though brief, passage across one extremity of the blissful Valley of Rasselas.

Immediately southward, west of Radiumopolis, are hot springs, a sort of geyser basin, whence hot waters are constantly derived for the baths of the city—and we found the latter to be numerous. Beyond these again, in the same direction, the continental rift of the Perpetual Nimbus almost closes, and the horrible crack becomes a crevice easily crossed. But beyond it again, in a crustal split that defies computation to measure, or science to explain, or experience to equal, lies, probably a radium (?) mass fifty or more miles in linear extent, with a width of three or four miles, and from which constantly pours an almost cosmic immensity of heat and light—*emanation-niton*. Its environs are withered, blasted deserts of rock. No one has ever approached it. Its emanation strikes a bare mountain face beyond it—a part of the Krocker Land Rim—and the incalculable volume of rays (Cathode Rays) reflected into the upper atmosphere over Krocker Land and immediately superior to the Valley of Rasselas, are somehow arrested in a nebulous ganglion which forms the Stationary Sun of this utterly fabulous region. This sun is really not stationary, nor is it in any sense equable, as hints in my narrative have already indicated. It moves, drifts north and south, east and west, undergoes perturbations, dies out, flares up, and would, to a properly equipped meteorological corps, stationed at Radiumopolis, furnish, I believe, an object of study absolutely unrivaled in terrestrial science.

But from time immemorial in the radium land fragments, nodules of a grayish or brownish mineral, were picked up and their *nuclei* were later revealed to be pure radium (they called it *Luxto*),

and from these by an accident—still retained in the tradition of the people as a heavenly bestowed revelation or miracle—the power of transmutation was learned.

Mr. Link, we had already suspected this, as you know, but when I actually learned it from the lips of Ziliah—the love-dazed Ziliah—I verily doubted my existence for a moment. In connection with the whole complex, so to speak, of wonders, it produced a half vertiginous feeling hard to describe. Ziliah's story was in this wise:

"A long, long, long, time ago, after a long darkness in the Stationary Sun, a terrible storm broke over Radiumopolis. The thunder, the lightning flashes, had never before been heard or seen, and there roared through the air an awful, destructive wind. It upset houses, blew over part of the Capitol, razed the trees; and then amid the thunder and the lightning, in a downrush of air, came a stranger, a little man strangely dressed in white with a black cap, and he had a dark face. He stayed with the people and taught them many things, but only to the *rulers*, the older men, the men of the council, would he teach the secret of making gold. He took them away with him on a journey westward to the radium country. They were absent many days and when they returned they were in rags, and their faces were pale, and haggard, but their hands and their pockets were filled with lumps of gold. The little stranger left as he had come in another awful storm. He went upward in a whirlwind and rode like a ghost through fearful gusts and disappeared in a roar of thunder and blaze of light, and a circle of flame descended from his feet and burnt a deep hole in the ground, as anyone can see to this day, below the hill in the snake pasture. But that wasn't all. He carried away with him the

beautiful daughter of the Head Man and she never was seen again."

"Why," exclaimed Hopkins, when I repeated the legend, "it's a clear case again of Alice Hatton and the Devil, though in that case Old Nick left nothing behind him but a bad smell:

"Now high, now low, now fast and now slow,
In terrible circumgyration they go—
The flame colored belle and her coffee faced beau!
Up they go once and up they go twice!
Round the hall! Round the hall! And now up they go thrice.
Now one grand pirouette the performance to crown,
Now again they go up, and they NEVER COME DOWN!"

Whatever the legend meant it intimated that someone had discovered this peculiar power in the radium mineral, and the knowledge had been carefully guarded, though, as Goritz said, "Of what use was the knowledge when gold was needed by no one?"

But the power itself, its physical or chemical postulates, the method, the material! Later we learned something, but not much, and I trust it may be reserved for Science, *with the material at my command* (which exerts this miraculous power) to solve the problem of the ages.

Ziliah told me something of the origins of her people and this curious civilization of theirs, but it was vague and inconclusive. The small people were an intensive people, whose unresisted control of a physically stronger and bolder race resembles some of the ethnic phenomena of Asia and Africa. Their literature was practically little else than long geneologies, the traditions transmitted by word of mouth of former rulers, councils, the doings of a

few notables, and a cosmology which very singularly resembled the story recently deciphered on a Sumerian relic by Professor Arno Poebel of the University of Pennsylvania.

In fact these Radiumopolites had lived uneventful lives and the incidents of history were controlled exclusively by the incidents of weather, the atmospheric and terrestrial perturbations involved in their unique environment. When had they reached this extraordinary polar depression? Were they autochthonous? Was it not more likely that the Eskimo people had assimilated with them, and had been absorbed rather than, as in Ziliah's account, the reverse? These were unanswered questions. To propose them only covered Ziliah's face with the shroud of an unhappy perplexity.

Their social economic life was very simple. As far as Ziliah could tell me they had always been governed by a patrician class, constituted of two orders, one the Eminences of the Capitol, to which Javan, Ziliah's father, belonged, and who numbered some twenty-four, presided over by a President, and all of whose families, retainers, etc., were for the most part domiciled in the great Capitol building; and the Magistrates of the city, who ruled over wards or bailiwicks, living in superior structures, whose roofs were also distinguished by gold plates, and which throughout the city blazed picturesquely among the lowlier red buildings.

The religion in primitive communities, always a controlling and oftentimes the most distinctive feature of their culture, was in the Krocker Land people a monotheistic faith which, however, secured the satisfaction of visualization in a deeply rooted and superstitious Tree and Serpent worship. Yet THERE WERE NO PRIESTS. And this anomalous condition was explained partially by Ziliah, who told me that it had years before been

instituted as a Law of the People that only a King could be their Priest. Whether they had ever had Kings she did not know but there was some prophecy made by one of the wise old men of the Council, a hundred or more years ago that a King would fall out of the clouds to them, that he would look like a poor man, that he would not know their language, that he would bring them a new wisdom. It was some time before I could make out the meaning of this. It dawned on me at last. Its full meaning received a startling explanation later. The services of the religion were controlled by the Council (the Areopagus, as the Professor styled it) of little Wise Men, and one prominent feature was this periodic peregrination through the great Pine Forest when the selected shrines were visited, the votive tablets nailed to the sacred trees, and the black snakes left to protect them. When I told Hopkins about all this he shook his head gloomily;

"Yes, and how about Goritz's loot? I guess the God of Krocker Land won't stand for that. Erickson we'll get it in the neck yet. The Professor is our trump card."

"Oh, yes," I replied. "How about yourself? The fair Ziliah pulls well with her father, I guess, and you *pull* well with her!"

Hopkins gave me a derisive glance. "Oh of course. We'll do the Captain Reece stunt—you remember?

"The captain saw the dame that day
Addressed her in his playful way—
'And did it want a wedding ring?
It was a tempting ickle sing!

" 'Well, well the chaplain I will seek,
We'll all be married this day week,
At yonder church upon the hill;
It is my duty, and I will!'

"The sisters, cousins, aunts and shape
Of every black enlivening snake
Attended there as they were bid;
It was their duty and they did."

Of course in exchange for all these confidences, if they could be called that, Ziliah exacted some confidences in return, and I confess I had to resort somewhat to invention, where I did not have Hopkins' precise directions in the matter, in meeting her exorbitant curiosity over everything concerning America. This disquisitional curiosity was singular in an unsophisticated maiden of a semi-civilized people who, it might have been supposed, would have contented herself with the indulgence of her affections and felt no interest in her hero's history.

But so it was. Spruce Hopkins understood her admiration, but was extremely puzzled, certainly at first, as to his own legitimate behavior in the affair.

CHAPTER XI

The Crater of Everlasting Light

The return of the Ophidian Pilgrims, as the Professor termed them, seemed unreasonably slow. The wardens, Ziliah, and the servants of the Capitol were all equally mystified over this unusual slowness. Cold, dry weather supervened, for indeed the stationary sun seemed sensibly to respond to the secular influences of the seasons, as we know them. We had all been too sufficingly engaged in studying our new surroundings, to regret or miss the absent Government, for a larger liberty had been vouchsafed us, though one thing was forbidden. We could not enter the precincts of the forest to the west of the Capitol.

We walked through the city, we explored the Capitol, we increased our acquaintance with the domestic habits of the populace, and the Professor and myself had accumulated notes on all of these things, to be incorporated in the work on Krocker Land which we fervently hoped to write, and which now—Alas!—may never see the light, for—the Professor is today a fixed official fact in that almost mythical land in the Arctic Sea. But I hasten.

Goritz had restrained with difficulty his almost uncontrollable impulse to perpetrate some outrage on the Capitol itself in his determination to accumulate a fortune of gold. We had averted this danger by very emphatic protests. We pointed

out to him its danger and the folly of jeopardizing our safety when the means of getting back—I had almost said to the Earth, as if we had actually left it—were now almost null, or were at least desperate. We told him that the plunder in his room, if found—and I began to fear that the depredations on the tree shrines had already been detected and were, in some way, a cause for the delayed return of the pilgrims—would involve us all in grave difficulties. To our entreaties or threats he became deaf or obstinate, and I had followed him, in the sleeping hours, when he expected to achieve his robberies without molestation, only to intercept him chiseling at the gold plates that encrusted the Capitol.

In the meanwhile the Professor, whose popularity increased with everyone, had become attracted to a young Eskimo whose first astonishment over the Professor's poll of red hair had been succeeded by a sort of personal adoration. He followed the Professor with an attachment and fascination that might have proved irksome. I made some inquiries of my informant, the acquiescent Ziliah, about him, and learned from her that he was a guide and the gatherer of radium. He alone apparently was able to penetrate the strange and ghastly country where the radium masses were collected, in that zone of the Unreal where lay the CRATER OF EVERLASTING LIGHT. His peculiar ability arose from his immunity to the influence of the radium itself, which invariably prostrated those who touched it, while the region itself forbade approach, by reason of those indeterminable emanations which destroyed the adventurers who entered it. For some reason, or, in some way, Oogalah Ikimya, the young Eskimo, enjoyed a unique invulnerability, and on his efforts Radiumopolis depended for its supply of radium. This distinction had given

him a particular arrogance. He alone now dared the inexplicable dangers, or even knew the devious route that threaded the labyrinths leading to this unutterable place.

When I told my friends about this, we all felt a mad desire to see, even at a distance, this intolerable land, a mineral Gehenna. I knew of the man's devotion to the Professor, and I felt certain we could gain his consent for us to accompany him. No one of us felt a keener impatience for the trip than Antoine Goritz. I told Ziliah of our wish. She grew pale with horror at the suggestion; her beautiful eyes pleaded with me to abandon the suicidal project; she pointed to Spruce Hopkins in piteous despair, she indeed flung herself at his feet, and invoked his commiseration of her should he be lost. Then she became tempestuous with scorn and indignation.

We could not go. The guards would prevent us. She would summon the magistrates of the city. Was she not Ziliah, daughter of the President, head man of the Council? We should not stir. NOT HE.

And that feminine transport over, she again importuned us, with terrible threats of our fate, not to consider it; so many had perished in the same outrageous pursuit; dead bodies marked the way; it was forbidden; the curse of the Crocodilo-Python followed those who went there; it meant madness, hysteria, death.

Finally it was made clear to us that whatever Oogalah Ikimya might say this influential and enamored young woman would prove hopelessly obstinate. Physical force would be invoked to restrain us. Oogalah himself rather welcomed this opportunity to show off his skill, his exceptional prowess, but his volubility and transports availed nothing. Hopkins executed what the French

might call a *coup d'amour* and liberated us. His overture to the despairing or incensed Ziliah through me was rather compromising and risky, but its effect was instantaneous and certain. Opposition vanished when Hopkins explained that the lovely woman *might get herself disliked*, and that any conceivable state of future happiness for both of them depended on *his having his way*.

So it eventually ended, as the mountainous objections seemed to melt away like dew before the sun, that we found ourselves on the road that led westward from Radiumopolis, under the guidance of Oogalah Ikimya, who strode before us with rapid swinging of legs and arms, his face radiant with pride. We had cautiously promised to be careful, not to go farther than was prudent, to satisfy ourselves with a distant view of the blasted land, and to return as quickly as we went, for it was insisted that we should hold ourselves ready for the disposition of the Council, when the long delayed pilgrims returned, to settle our fate.

The noisy rumor of our departure for the Radium Country, and the haggling and delays that preceded it, Ziliah's outbursts and excitement, the consultations over the permission to let us go at all, Oogalah's gossiping activity about it, led to the population's—which besieged us and surrounded us almost daily—outpouring on the day of our departure, so that for miles we were accompanied by a crowd watching us with increased wonder, and, among the older, with much ominous head shaking, and, with the younger, many sneering comments, a little cheering and some obstreperous farewells. The Professor evoked much enthusiasm—he always did. I do not know the *rationale* or the etiquette of love matters in Krocker Land, but I remember that Hopkins took the profusely smiling and opulently lovely, young and small Ziliah aside, and

tried to make her understand—without my help—that their public parting should be very formal, no matter how ecstatic their private one might be. On top of that, considerably to his disappointment or chagrin perhaps, Ziliah hugged him pretty tightly when they stood on the terrace stairs as we left the palace, and the very observing public gathered about were neither amused nor interested.

It was rather funny I thought, but I admitted, I am sure, that as a display of superb manners it would be unmatched anywhere else in the world of so-called culture today. Atala came into my mind, though Spruce Hopkins was a good deal of a contrast to the sentimental Rene, and there was a certain *aplomb*, directness, vivacity and insistence in Ziliah that hardly suggested the Natchez maiden. And there certainly was no Outogamiz.

Well, at length we were on our journey. At first the highway, for, though seldom used, this western road was in a state of fine preservation, traversed a thick but low wood entangled with undergrowth. We had never entered this wood before and had been especially prohibited from entering it. Of course we tried to see all we could, but there was absolutely nothing remarkable about it. The land to the left sloped off into a marshy tract. The people were numerous also at this point, which interfered with our inspection, and I know now that Oogalah, obedient to instructions, hurried us along this section of the route—he first, the Professor second, then Goritz, then myself, then Hopkins—until we reached a spare, meagre country, beyond which rose the western ranges of the Pine Tree Gredin.

The land rose steeply, but it was almost bare, the parched soil supported a ragged growth, and in this appeared a few stunted pine trees. Apparently, for many miles north and south, this condition

prevailed, an unhappy and strong contrast to the pine tree zone to the east of the amphitheater, where the land bubbled with springs, was murmurous with brooks, and where the lofty, splendid trees spread a temple-like shade over the vast decline.

Beyond us already rose the faint shimmer of the *Perpetual Nimbus*, that wall-like screen of vapor that enclosed Krocker Land within the mountainous Rim that lies outside of this veil of cloud, though here, as I have already noted, the Nimbus was wavering, inconstant, and in patches of the distance absent. The Deer Fels country and the aquatic and marshy plateaux were from here scarcely distinguishable. A level tract of stony wastes was this, varied by occasional rugged hills, depressions that glistened balefully, dead ravines barely supporting the niggardly growth of sapless yellow plants that lurked here and there below boulders, or sought the moisture of a few sullen pools whose replenishment depended upon the infrequent but, we were told, furious storms.

And the Nimbus—a paltry reproduction of the incalculable vaporous discharges that encircle at every other point this hidden paradise. The chasm here was indeed deep, but imperfectly continuous, and huge horsebacks of stone piled within it formed practicable though most broken and uneven bridges across it. The steam rising from the heated rocks below was not visibly referable to any water supply, as on the east, where the plunging rivers so abundantly furnished the means of raising this colossal stage curtain, and there was absent from here that tumultuous rolling ocean of clouds in the sky. Probably underground courses supplied the water, for, after we had surmounted one of the least precipitous and angular of the bridges and had gotten into the rising territory

beyond, we encountered a puzzling intricacy of profound cracks or fissures, and we could not only hear but could see the patchy lustres of running water in them.

From this point our guide turned abruptly northward, taking us through a terrible desolation of rocks, with the high snow-clad peaks of the Krocker Land Rim gloriously looming skyward on the left. I shall not forget that strange transit. It was hard work. We carried our own supplies, the water and a few instruments, and their weight was almost insupportably increased by the discomforts of the harsh, inhospitable land we traveled through, and, by some dizzying influence which began to strain our heads with headaches, to parch our throats, and to produce a most uncomfortable and absurd illusion of treading on air cushions, This last hallucination made us unsteady, and after a while it pestered us so much that we were compelled to stop at short intervals to rest.

Oogalah kept on well ahead, looking back at us every few minutes and distrustfully shaking his head, with incessant gestures for increased speed. We were not over anxious to hurry. The region was extraordinary and its geologic features, as connected with this unparalleled deposit, or vein, or lode, or whatever it was, of radium, were certainly worth noting. And then our heads! Hopkins diverted us by his misery.

"I'd like to look inside of my cranium just now. I couldn't begin to tell how it feels; something, I should say, like what gunpowder men call *deflagration* is taking place there, popguns going off every few minutes, with a hurdy-gurdy accompaniment in my ears and a bad taste in my mouth.

"The Professor really ought to be very careful and avoid any extra exertion. In a bean as full as his, there probably isn't much room for expansion,

and I guess the right word for describing our condition *is* expansion—almost unlimited. My head may seem no bigger than usual, but I should say it had already grown large enough for distribution to a dozen headless gentlemen, enough to give each of them a head piece of ordinary dimensions. Whew—but this is fierce."

The poor fellow had clapped both hands to his head as if to actually hold it together. And with all of us the inscrutable sensations were becoming insufferable. Goritz insisted on keeping on but we overruled that. It was just possible that our resting a while might accustom us to the strange influence of atmosphere, and enable us to proceed without this torturing plague of heat and noise and dilation in our poor heads. We sat down. Oogalah quickly discovered our reluctance, and was back with us in a trice, gesticulating and vociferating as well, absolutely unaffected, which brought to the suffering Yankee's face the most comical expression of disgust and surprise.

"I say, Erickson, this has me guessing. What do you suppose that fellow's made of? Rubber? Cork? Do you know I believe he'd put electrocution on the fritz. You'd be compelled to pulverize him if you ever expected to drive the life out of his body. One hundred yards more of this and I'll either join the choir invisible *ipse motu*, as they say in the books, or just get one of you to pass me over with a wallop on the cocoa, or a fine slit along the carotid. I believe I could go so far as to commit *hari-kari*, and not know it. It can't be possible that you fellows don't notice it."

"Notice it!" I answered. "My head feels like a balloon. I almost wonder I don't float off with it. We can't last this way. It would be a sorry ending to this famous exploit, if we were all to burst like soap bubbles."

Oogalah by means of elaborate pantomime to the Professor, and a few intelligible words to Goritz acquainted us with his assurance that a hill about one hundred yards away would bring us relief. We struggled to it, sick and staggering. To our amazement upon ascending it a little way relief came, and our tormented heads sensibly shrank—so it felt—to something like their usual volume. Then we noticed, guided by the Professor's acumen in such matters, that while the region was unmistakably an igneous complex, the rocks we had passed over were entirely granitic, and the elevation on which we now stood was a basic olivine-peridotite, dense and black, and in some way exempt from the radiumistic occlusions which perhaps saturated the granitic batholith around it. I will not stop to discuss this, sir, but later we indeed established the fact that the enormous outflow of granite lava had brought to the surface innumerable radium bodies, distributed through it in molecular aggregates of considerable size, and that the unseen but voluminous discharge of the emanation so affected us, while the gabbro dikes, containing none, afforded an impermeable flooring for our passage.

Then, too, we were now approaching the splendid prism of light that shot upward, yet obliquely, in a vast pulsating diffusion of a delicate radiance that grew, as we advanced, more and more intolerable. Our progress consisted now in crossing, as quickly as our stumbling movements would allow, the granitic intervals that separated the ranges of low basic hills. On these latter we regained our strength and composure, and prepared for the succeeding dashes that carried us over the perilous interludes. It was amazing to watch the *insouciance* and activity of our guide. He did not even protect his eyes. It seemed as if some physiological peculiarity rendered him immune to the terrifiyng

disorders that signalized to us, instantly, the presence of these puissant particles of radium, or else he had become so from his long continued exposures, a theory quite incomprehensible to us.

But even to this dogged and halting march there was a limit. Oogalah himself had enough rectitude of purpose to realize that, and perhaps too he felt vainglorious of his superiority. He indicated almost sternly a final towering hill, a continuation of the broken cordillera we had been following, which should be the terminus of our exploration. We—at least Hopkins and myself—would not have cared to overpass it. We were deadly faint and exhausted when we reached it, and but for the magnanimous help of the Eskimo, who carried our packs, I think we would have swooned and fallen by the way. The Professor seemed the least susceptible to the mysterious influence, and this amusingly vexed and confounded Hopkins. Brute willpower and his insatiable fever of desire to obtain the transmuting substance which raised before him the vision of boundless wealth, kept Goritz on his feet. With the Professor it was the energizing power of scientific curiosity. The paralyzing effect of suffocation was really noticeable.

Well, after a few minutes' rest, with Goritz impatient and the Professor aflame with wonder, we started up a portentously narrow hill, and a high one too. Oogalah pointed out its pinnacle as our destination, and then turned westward into that dizzying and unearthly country wherein lay the trough of radium. Around us fell the radiance of its wonderful emission, but we found that the climbing path—it had been worn well into the rock by previous pilgrims—clung to the eastward scarp of the hill, and was therefore actually in shadow—a welcome relief. Perhaps five hours were consumed in this toilsome ascent, but when we reached

the last winding trail, and had clambered to a small shelf immediately under the ragged apex, we looked over a scene of unparalleled terribleness.

The pen of Dante or the pencil of Dore alone could have done justice to its weird and frightful desolation, not entirely expressed in lifelessness, but in the awful grimace in it of tortured and disfigured matter. The blacks, purples and reds, smeared over it wrote in it a sort of agony of disgrace and unseemliness and pain. I wonder if the landscapes of the Moon resemble it.

For a long way in the foreground, where we saw with astonishment the running figure of Oogalah, stretched a broken platform of white quartzite, and through this sprang the strangest confusion of lines, skeins, dashes and drippings of black, purple, brown, and traceable here and there, as of the tracks of a bleeding animal or man, chained drops of red. It was not beautiful certainly, it had no ornamental or decorative features; it was, rather, scoriaceous and blasting.

Beyond this rugose platform rose two mounds, one ashen and white—the Professor said it was a bleached, corroded and kaolinized granite—the other a purplish, livid mass streaked with threads or blotches of yellow (sulphur, the Professor thought), and these hills ran north and south, becoming reduced to sprawling and unwholesome heaps of slaggy consistency which ever and anon encroached on the quartzite zone and even encumbered it, as if tossed upon it in drifts of scattered nodules.

Through the gateway, between the two first mounds, we saw even now the form of Oogalah passing, but he was no longer erect. He was crawling on hands and knees, and over his head hung a towel. Hopkins and myself shuddered for him. His venturesome undertaking seemed to us *simply* suicide. He intended to bring us each a

mass of the mineral—a small piece. When he gathered this miracle-working substance for Radiumopolis, we were told, he first camped behind one of the peridotite hills, then issued upon his dangerous mission, collected what he could, returned to his camp, and for weeks kept at it until his supply was sufficient. The store made, he removed it in the same laborious way, stage by stage, until he came to the safer country, where he was met by numerous assistants who transported the radium homeward.

But we could see from our elevation beyond these dead heaps, beyond, into the vale of Acheron, as it were,

> *Quam super haud ullae poterant impune volantes*
> *Tendere iter pennis;*

a further dead valley declining into the deeper chasm from which sprang the auroral light. This chasm was evidently indefinitely prolonged northward; from it rose the coronation or rays which seemed converged upon a marvelous blazing precipice on the further boundary of this irregular, narrow, longitudinal canon. Into the canon itself it was impossible to look. It was enclosed in the upper valley which we could see, and which presented a spectacle of stony desolation. Its sides were evidently precipitous on the east, and pretty generally hidden from us, but on the west it presented to us a long, receding slope of rock palely illuminated beneath the light streaming in a broad and thick flood over it. These rock exposures were curiously discolored, and also curiously spotted with glow-spots, from included radium perhaps.

Clefts or rents tore down their sides, and ragged, serpentine embrasures interrupted the cliffs that bordered it. Black recesses contrasted with the

bright surfaces, and sharp crests (*arete*) bristled here and there in jagged series, where the cliffs attained elevations of probably thousands of feet. It was a vast abyss and was split more deeply by a secondary and later fissure which had uncovered the central masses of radium. Nowhere could we discern any evidences of aqueo-thermal activity, no steam spirals anywhere. The vapor line was eastward along the crack where the Perpetual Nimbus appeared. Beyond, far beyond, rose the snowy tops, the glacier ridden summits of the Krocker Land Rim.

It was enthralling. Remember, Mr. Link, it was the night time of the polar world, and here all was bathed in light or silhouetted in shadow, while that Stationary Sun which filled the immense valley land with light, imparted to it warmth; it shone in its peculiar zenith, deriving in some way (by reflection from the crystalline walls to the west) its replenishment of light and heat from this stupendous source of both. We watched in a trance of amazement for hours. There were perceptible pulsations in the emanation, and it was altogether remarkable to observe that these were recorded in the variable sun, obviously susceptible to these changes. Its reference (the sun's) to the radium masses, here uncovered, was now indisputable.

It had now in the advanced season become apparent that the earth's secular changes were not quite dissipated in the Krocker Land basin by its unique feature of the Stationary Sun. For weeks it had been growing colder, and now—to our astonishment a spectacle of dazzling beauty relieved the singular weird terror of this lifeless scene. We saw a gathering gloom from far away darken the peaks of the Krocker Land Rim; it spread and became revealed as a snowstorm. A wind brushed over us—another instant and the wide zone of

delicate radiation was transformed into an indescribably glorious firmament of stars, shifting, dying out and renewed, and around us from the sky fell a shower of icy particles, a flurry from the tempest that was sweeping over the distant ranges.

Hardly had we recovered from the shock of this unexpected display when we heard the voice and saw the form of Oogalah approaching our position, from the opposite side of the hill. He had executed his errand and was returning, and the expanded bag in his hands showed that he had accomplished his purpose. We had seen him disappear in the defiles beyond the crumbling hills. He showed the strain of his work and the effect of the unnatural influence of that exposure, but in a short time, after resting, his strength and composure returned, and he was ready for the home journey. He afterwards told me he had never looked into the chasm, or chasms, whence the radium emissions or radiations proceeded. He had not cared to. Once on the field of his dangerous occupation, groveling to the ground, he moved cautiously over the rocky flooring, and extracted the mineral masses from the veins wherein they seemed to be segregated, *hammering them out.* Formerly he had been able to pick the nodules up loose from the granite ledges. That was no longer possible. He had exhausted the supply of free lumps, and now he was compelled to practice this superficial mining. He knew that the surface finds were abundant further down the slopes of the defile, but he dreaded the experiment of entering further into the disorganizing influences of the lethal chamber. He had once been rash in that way and had swooned, and only the brush of some cavorting wind current from above, such as we had ourselves felt, had sufficiently revived him to enable him to regain his feet and to escape.

On our return Goritz monopolized Oogalah. He

plied him with questions, and evinced the most excited interest in his work. Poor fellow—the poison of the lust for gold, *sacri fames auri*, had entered his mind and heart. A magnificent man, Mr. Link, sturdy, resourceful, remorselessly self forgetful, and most simple in tastes, a lovable brother, if ever there was one, but sir, never the same after that unlucky find of the gold belt, when we crossed the first barrier of the Krocker Land Rim.

He became secretive, avaricious, moody, impatient, a delirious dreamer, and then most unaccountably suspicious. It was a revolution in character that would have puzzled an expert in psychology or nerves to explain. To me it was a pretty bad shock, and when at last the unhappy man—but let that wait. It displays a measure of the pernicious power of the temptation of money to corrupt (the word in Goritz's case is misapplied), to alter nature and temperament, and all because he expected to enjoy its pleasures in the world we had left; for gold in Krocker Land for any of ordinary uses, like ours, was literally not much more desirable than so much earth. To the Radiumopolite it administered, it is true, a mild esthetic pleasure. There was some recondite recognition in his ingenuous nature of its beauty at least, and its unchangeableness. To the rulers, the doctors, the chiefs, it may have seemed more; at any rate they devoted it to the purposes of distinction and religion.

Goritz on our way back was most impatient to examine the strange mineral Oogalah had brought us, but the man refused to let him, intimating, quite fiercely, that it should be distributed among us when we got back to the Capitol, and not before. This refusal really arose from his intention of giving the Professor the largest piece. As Hopkins averred,

the Professor had Oogalah "*buffaloed*" an epitomized substitute, certainly not intelligible, for a lengthier explanation of the Professor's extraordinary influence over the man.

I remember we were all silent on our way back; we were dazed, and the journey had been rapid and arduous. The Professor himself had indeed, for weeks past, neglected to speculate on the wonders about us, and we now seldom received from him those lectures with which he had first instructed us. Perhaps he was overwhelmed by the incredible realization of the prophecies he had made to us on the sylvan banks (how far away and distant they seemed) of the beautiful fiord in Norway, under a summer sky.

Once again within the charmed borders of the Valley of Rasselas we found the highway deserted. It was a contrast to the eager multitudes that had escorted us when we left. Past the mysterious swamps on the right from which, at one moment, I thought I heard a queer sucking wail or bark, as of some big animal, and on into the city, and yet no encounters! Past the bathhouses, over the wide serpent pasture with its populous cribs, up the wide western terrace of steps of the Golden Capitol, and not one welcoming face—only the listless snakes sluggishly gliding or coiled in varnished mats.

To these omnipresent, pervading inhabitants we had become, in a manner of speaking, accustomed; we found them in the streets of the city, and through the courtyard of the Palace, over the parapets, ensconced in niches in the walls, rising hideously from the pavement of the inner halls, or unexpectedly and unwholesomely slipping over the mats of our rooms, or dripping like dark thongs from their cornices. Hopkins detested them.

"I tell you, Erickson," he would exclaim, "an externalized *delirium tremens* of this sort is

worse than drink. Beats me how people ever came to think well of these critters. They're the most painfully unpleasant denizens of this earth that I have ever encountered—*to me.* Tastes differ of course, but I can't help feeling that nobody really likes 'em, and pretences to the contrary are just plain lies, or the deponents have never enjoyed the advantages of a public school education, a hot bath, towels, soap, the morning newspaper, pure food, clean shirts, and the white things that generally go to make up white civilization—in other words, Alfred, they're just savages like these big and little demons all around us."

"How about Ziliah?" I might ask mischievously.

The handsome fellow would smile bewitchingly. "Say Erickson, if Ziliah and I ever go to housekeeping we'll cut out the snakes—*I will*—and I'll start up Anti-Snake missions, until we get the people converted into regular Christians—the real Irish sort. Then I'll come the St. Patrick act on them, and exterminate the varmints, and coming generations, hereabouts, will call me blessed."

We were somewhat more astonished to enter the western doorway of the Capitol and still find no one, but we could see darkly through its dingy length—the radium lamps were covered—and noted a crowd outside of its eastern entrance. At the same time something like beating cymbals and tanging drums came to our ears, and then unmistakably the shouts of people.

"They've come back," shouted Oogalah in his lingo, and he rushed past us, mad with expectation.

We followed him with almost equal precipitancy, and the bag of radium mineral that had cost us all this effort was forgotten. Oogalah dropped it, we neglected it in the sudden excitement, and—*it was never again found.*

CHAPTER XII

The Pool of Oblation

Oogalah was right. It was the return of the pilgrims, and the delighted city, plunged for days in wondering doubt over their safety had rushed bodily out to meet them. Our momentary importance was hopelessly eclipsed. I dreaded lest it might undergo an inverted resurrection, and that these potent little men, incensed over our discovered depredations, might turn angrily upon us and destroy us. For the moment I forgot these apprehensions in pure admiration at the novel exhibition.

When we emerged on the courtyard at the eastern entrance of the Capitol we found the broad mound on which the gold house was erected crowded. Immediately in front of it was a jostling mass of women, and prominent among them, by reason of stature and position, was standing the pretty Ziliah, arrayed in certainly her best and most becoming costume, at the head of the broad stairway, a view down which led the eye straight eastward over the wide thoroughfare, now fenced in by enthusiastic multitudes. Literary reminders constantly recur to me, and just then I was amused to find myself picturing Rome when Pompey entered it and recalling Marullus' proud words, in Julius Caesar:

"And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made a universal shout,
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks
To hear the replication of your sounds
Made in her concave shores?"

There was no Tiber, to be sure, but there were the people, and the shout, albeit rather more shrill and piercing than thunderous. The air seemed at moments and in places thick with the rising hats that were tossed with splendid nerve, in acclamation of the advancing procession.

On it came, hardly visible at first, save as an oscillating shimmer and movement, and accompanying the incessant rumpus of the shattering cymbals and the thumping drums. The musicians evinced a pardonable pride and extracted as much noise as vigor and appreciation could extort from their very willing instruments. It was exciting enough. As the first companies of the Eskimos approached and the cataract of sound poured over us we sought some higher outlook. A narrow ledge like a water-table separated the second from the first story of rooms in the communal palace. We could, by boosting and climbing on each other, reach this, and once there the *coup d'oeil* would be complete. Goritz bent forward. With the lightness of a deer Hopkins sprang up, straightened himself, and touched the coping. He swung onto it, and—I half dreaded it would give way—it held. Then we maneuvered the Professor up. I followed and with a long pull we jerked Goritz off his feet and hauled him to us, and thus rather absurdly and flagrantly placed, we awaited the event. Our feet dangled over the crowd below and, as we were in full view of the terrace of steps and the road, the first thing the returning "doctors" would behold, would be our desecrating presence on the walls of

the palace. But we were oblivious to consequences just then.

Gazing down immediately underneath our perch we saw the ladies of the Capitol bunched in a many colored knot at the head of the steps. Crushing upon them were the servants, attendants, guards, and an indiscriminate crowd of citizens, and down these steps, kept inviolately clean, on either side, was a line of the taller Eskimos, a man to every step, with a black snake coiled round his waist, but with its neck and head held outward in an inclined position, so that a view from our seat crossed a profile of extended snakes' heads and necks, somewhat symmetrically displayed in two series. It was a most peculiar bizarre picture.

Already the first regiment of men in the procession had halted, fallen irregularly backward along the side of the road, and then massed beyond these was the tireless band, men and women in their tight bodices and sacks, their naked legs, and the picturesque gold knee-caps. Almost instantly appeared the bright gold poles, around which, when we met them in the pine forest, had been coiled the imprisoned snakes. The snakes were no longer on them. The companies holding these advanced, strode up the steps, and stalwartly, with a martial erectness absent from everyone else, lined themselves with the snake holders. The diversified and variegated cohorts of the little people which we had noticed in the forest, had evidently dispersed, lost here and there along the route, for they doubtless were adventitious accretions, followers from custom or for amusement, and with them too had vanished the very considerable commissariat.

There remained only the jaunting cars, with their odd but impressive little occupants, and that jolting, shivering, monstrous gold throne, bearing the shocking effigy of the Crocodilo-Python. Yes, and

here they were! The tugging rams with snail tipped horns, and the council in violet gowns bedizened with gold braid and chains, utterly insignificant lilliputian creatures, with their beetle heads. True, but the deadly power lurking in those metal tubes—What was that?—not to be gainsaid, not to be denied. The thought of it gave me a shuddering sense of impotence, before these caricatures of men.

Of course the wagons could not ascend the steps, and the governors softly alighted—it was quite delightful to see their noiseless flitting to and fro—purring into each other's ears as they came together, and then separating with mimic gestures of expostulation or disgust or approval. They looked, so we thought, almost as they had when we first met them, and I began to wonder whether they did not harbor in their light, frameless and bobbing little anatomies, extraordinary powers of resistance, abnormal energies perhaps.

There was a little decorous shifting to and fro, and ceremonious bowing and scraping, which had the most incalculably ludicrous appearance, as if, after all, they were nothing but vaudeville puppets. Hopkins of course appreciated all that uproariously. Finally they started up the stairs, led by the benignant little gentleman who had told the Professor to "speak," and afterwards most effectively had gone through the dumb show of telling him to "shut up," and who, by the way, was Ziliah's father. They rose towards us with a mincing dignity that was really pleasing. We noticed again their whiteness, their thinness, their long arms, their thin fingers, their senile-like agitation, their pointed beards, and the singular splendor of their eyes. The latter were now uncovered, the disfiguring goggles hung from their necks by the most delicate filaments of gold.

There were quite a number of them, perhaps

thirty in all, and as they slowly drew near to us we realized that while they belonged to the racial configuration of the little people, they were probably immensely removed from them, too, by an intellectual gap that bore some reference to training or descent. The Semitic character of these little people was irrefragable.

Hardly had the President—it turned out that such an appellation might describe him—reached the middle of the ascent than we were treated to a charming show of filial affection. Ziliah, ravishingly fixed up in close fitting attire, and distinguished by some gold trinkets that became her extremely well, ran down the steps and—fell into her father's arms? No—not that—exactly. There were some insurmountable difficulties, related to the comparative sizes of the principals, that made that commonplace impossible. Ziliah took her father *up*, hugged him, kissed and—*set him down again*.

I heard Hopkins groan, and the query came in an undertone: "Where's my mother-in-law?"

After that there was a great deal of confusion. Mothers and daughters, wives and sons, the magistrates from the city and innumerable friends poured over the steps to meet the dignitaries, and, for all the world, it just then resembled, allowing for the difference in latitude and other things, the homecoming of a western deputation to your congress; their arrival at the town hall, and their admiring reception by the neighbors. And the democratic expression of things increased. The snake sharps on the steps, so Hopkins designated them, disappeared with their charges, depositing them in the enclosures in the "snake pasture," the gold-polemen scrambled up the steps and entered the Capitol, the rams, jaunting cars, and the grinning throne-horror left too, but where I could not

ZILIAH AND HER FATHER

see. We encountered the latter again under pretty startling circumstances. Then when all this had happened the crowds from the city jammed everything, with a shrilling of voices ascending to us that sounded like a magnification, a megaphoning, of countless crickets. The bigger people, the Eskimos, were scarcely visible. We felt relieved—*I did.* We had been quite forgotten, and that spoke volumes for our safety. We discussed the situation.

Hopkins: "Suppose we get down and join the house warming. It's just possible that they have something better to eat than usual on occasions like this. I'd welcome a change of diet."

I: "As this was a huge snake picnic, it may be they wind it up by eating snakes."

Hopkins: "Bah!"

The Professor: "My friends, now that the Faculty has returned Erickson must interview them, explain our mission, establish scientific relations with them if possible, get the records, assure them of the astonishment which will be felt over their existence when we report it before the scientific bodies of the world, solicit from them some demonstration of their knowledge of transmutation, aeronautics, the X-ray; those powerful tubes they manipulate; and then really we should be thinking of *getting home.*"

I: "Professor, I don't think we'll find the Faculty, as you call them, very communicative ("Tight wads?" interjected Spruce.) I've learned some things from Ziliah, and judging from her communications I believe these people know very little about themselves and what's more I believe they exercise their occult powers without knowing the *rationale* of them either. At any rate while I can get along with their speech I know I should be floored in any intricate matter. As to—getting home. I agree with you, but—HOW?

The Professor: "But Alfred, be reasonable. Learn what you can. Try them. I do admit our return presents difficulties."

Goritz: "There can't be much of the naphtha launch left now."

Hopkins: "But Antoine, you are not thinking of getting out! I believe you intended to apply for naturalization papers."

The Professor: "There are the—Balloons? Perhaps—"

Hopkins: "Dear Professor, cut it out. There is some difference in size and weight between these midgets and us. Really, if you're solicitous on the subject of the posthumous notices you are destined to receive in the learned journals of the world, try the balloons. None in mine. Rocking the cradle and watching Ziliah cook snakes is preferable. And seriously I could make a hunch at getting on here if somehow we could improve the brand of the religion—but this snake business has me going. I guess, too, a little eugenics might help the people. Interbreeding, I should say, with the huskies would add something to the linear dimensions of the inhabitants, for really the girls have some class."

I: "It seems likely to me that one might reach Beaufort Sea by a short overland route to the west. It's pretty clear that Radiumopolis is far towards the western border of the Valley of Rasselas, and the Rim, and the sea beyond that, are not far off. Our trip to the radium country showed that."

The Professor: "The importance of this discovery outranks anything that has happened in the world since the discovery of America. It's too astounding to be even indicated in a few words. The radium deposit alone is the most tremendous fact in nature today. For one, I should deplore the destruction of this most curious aboriginal culture with the ethnic problems displayed in it, but it is

our indefeasible right to proclaim to the world the presence here of the radium. The whole aspect, industry, economics, finance, *health* of the world will be profoundly modified by its exploitation.

Goritz: "Well I should say nothing about it. Let it be. We can use what we learn about its powers for ourselves. That seems right enough to me. What can be the use of turning the whole world topsy-turvy, and of course as a consequence exterminating these innocent people. Do you suppose you could hold back for one hour the rampaging hordes that would pour into this little valley and inundate it with hungry, riotous savages? Put a mining town with its rum and its demons in the place of this contented realm with its picturesque life, its peaceful ceremonies, its long inherited customs that for centuries upon centuries have never changed; erase or debauch a community that on the very edge of the roaring world, since time began, has kept on its quiet hidden way in this unassailable nook, and do you think you will ever forgive yourselves for the ruin, the devastation? It would curse you to your death."

We all looked at Goritz with surprise. He did not often turn on the oratory like this. It was a touch, I said to myself, of his old nature. The plea was well made and it kept us silent for some time, and I think the longer we measured its meaning the more it affected us. Suddenly Hopkins broke the silence.

"Say, where's everybody? There isn't a soul in sight." It was true; the mound hill, the courtyards, the road, the steps, the doorway, the snake pasture, the parapets, which it seemed but a few moments before had been crammed with the chattering multitude, were deserted. In our absorption, seated above the heads of the crowd on the comfortable ledge, we had forgotten to note its

disappearance. Always anxious over some possible new development which would endanger our safety, and never confident of the good intentions of the little wiseacres with their preternatural powers, their minute crooked devices, and their probable deceit and malevolence, I now felt some alarm at this silence and desertion. Was it some new turn in affairs, a new stage in their ceremonial procedure that portended any harm to us? I had wondered over the apparent forgetfulness of our presence, and our absolute neglect. Was it part of some preconcerted design, an ostentatious indifference, concealing some mischievous plot for our undoing? For it was quite easy, indeed unavoidable to conceive, that these little rulers, impregnable hitherto in their power, would view suspiciously our advent among them. A secluded bred-in civilization like this, is jealous of intrusion, resents the foreigner, and spurns novelty. It has always been so and the Faculty—the word the Professor complimented them with—would readily descry in us the forerunners of a more dangerous invasion. It would be well to watch them and—where they were?

I leaped to the ground and the rest at once followed. We ran around the corner of the building, first to the north—in which direction the city was far less expanded than southward and eastward—and the same emptiness confronted us. But to the south and at the west the contrast was startling. The areas were packed with streaming throngs; crowds from streets were discharging into the broad highway leading westward, that one on which we had just returned from the radium hunt, and, as we hastened to the west side of the Capitol, we saw that the concourse was passing out on the same boulevard towards the swamp land just outside the ranges of the city. Our elevation enabled us to trace the variegated ribbon of people, made

up of the little folk for the most part, and occasionally a towering figure, moving *silently* outward in an enormous evacuation of the city. What had preceded them or what they followed we could not undertake to determine.

Fragments and sections of the formal parade, as it had returned from the ceremonial circuit, were embedded in the stream, and we guessed the Council led the procession. Glancing into the broad central hall of the Capitol—where the radium lamps were—nothing was seen. The big communal house of government was bare and abandoned. Goritz's hand passed enviously over the broad encrusting plates of gold which now any ruthless pillager could have torn away, but he did not attempt to remove one. We certainly would have interposed had he tried it. It required no deliberation on our part to conclude to mingle in the crowds. It might be that if their destination was the swamps we now might learn something of the uses of that mystery-shrouded depression and reservoir.

Running down the western terrace of steps we were soon immersed in the multitude, though by reason of our physical proportions we rose above them like tall saplings among bushes. Some familiarization with us had been gained by the Radiumopolites, and although we never stirred abroad without awakening interest, they no longer regarded us with the first unsubdued wonder and curiosity. And on this occasion we were less likely to excite attention, as a more dreadful expectation filled their minds.

Slowly we made our way for a mile or so until the sombre thickets and enshrouding vegetation of the swamps came into view. And then a rapid dispersal began. Down innumerable paths and trails, all more or less artificially finished, the people vanished. Files of them entered these forest alley-

ways and the quickly thinning throngs left us comparatively free. We passed a broad road leading to the left, down which in the distance we discerned a line of vans pulled by Eskimos, and on them prostrate and bandaged or chained figures, some moving, we thought! For the moment we were rooted with horror. What could they be? What was this? A public execution, a sacrifice, a holocaust? Good God—could it be a cannibalistic feast? Great as were our suspicion and terror, the constraining power of a savage curiosity drove us on. Down the very next lane we met, we rushed *pele-mele*, with something like rage, something like disgust, something like a sickening fear, a blend hard to analyze.

Perhaps we had run a half a mile, when we burst through the last encircling hedge of bushes and found ourselves on the shore of a turbid, muddy, malodorous pool, confined by a low wall of clay, paved with tile, and then surrounded by the outstretched cordons of the adult population—not a child was visible—of Radiumopolis! And immediately above us, at the side, so that we could inspect the actions of its occupants, was a low platform, also of clay, perhaps twenty feet high. On this platform, ranged in a circle, were those detestable worthies (?) and behind them stood the vans, and on the vans—motionless bodies in small low heaps, like fagoted wood! Yes! They were dead—all dead—*quite dead*. God be praised for that!

From somewhere back of the platform the cymbals began their clamorous cries, but whether it was due to an augmented band or an exasperated effort, the noise seemed redoubled, rising into a screeching tumult quite indescribable. And then the people shouted. It sounded like *Lam-bo-o, Lam-bo-oo*.

It was a curious vocality and perhaps as nearly

as anything might be likened to the querulous squeal of monkeys, with just a faint amelioration of disapproval on the assumption that it was singing. That—the combined discord of the cymbals and the singing—continued for perhaps fifteen minutes, with intervals of a minute or so. It was altogether unearthly. Now we began to see that the pond or pool or swamp connected by a narrow neck of water with more remote basins, that may have had interminable connections in all directions, forming a web of waterways.

From these distant bayous and lagoons now issued three or four or five sinuous monsters, rushing forward upon the waves of their own disturbance, their saurian heads raised slightly, and the huge convolutions of their tails discerned in the wash of their wakes, as they hastened, as if with some anticipatory avidity for their meal, towards us, towards the platform, from where the immolation awaited them. They were the *Crocodilo-Pythons*. We recognized at once the white-green beasts we had seen in the Saurian Sea. Yes, the same obscene, unspeakable beasts.

They only revealed their terrifying bulk as they approached the platform and finally came to rest before it. Then inserting their muscular posteriors in the mud, beyond which lazily rolled the python-like tails in portentous folds, their heads and forequarters slowly rose into the air. This exposure made us quail and yet exult, with an excitement no language can convey. The same repulsive coloring masked them, the greenish-yellow skin, the agitated and red blotches. Higher and higher, mounted the snapping jaws, and at moments the mucus covered eyes emerged with a baleful glitter; the long neck swayed and the short front legs beat the air, as if in expostulation at delay. The fascinating thrill of horror which such a sight

causes can be understood; only the painter can justify it.

And, sir, they were fed—*fed* with corpses, while the infernal cymbals banged on, and the insignificant people wailed their "*Lam-bo-oo, Lam-bo-oo!*"

The bodies were naked and they were the dead of both races; the gaping jaws caught them as the sea lion catches with inerrant skill the tossed fish, that no sooner reaches the expectant jaws than it vanishes with a hollow-sounding gulp. So for the most part did these small bodies go, the dilating necks of the animals marking their descent to the cavernous abdomens. A few vicious twirls maybe, a shivering hammering together of the jaws, accompanied at times with a dip beneath the water, sending muddy waves to the banks, indicated the less easy negotiation of the larger bodies.

Revolted and overcome by the pervading half-sickening stench—in part the exhalations from the vile saurians—we turned away. As we went back I caught a full view of the little dignitaries in their violet gowns, their glittering chains and their beehive hats, and what an incongruous contrast it made. In their frailness, their whiteness, their chirping volubility, with their overmade heads, their tenuous shanks and their globed eyes they took on, to me, the whimsical likeness to delicately cut and animated *nitsukies* in ivory, dressed like toys; and I thought too their enlarged heads might keep company with their compressed hearts, though certainly we could not say yet, and religious habits often accompany many horrors, much bad taste, and a lot of antiquated humbug.

We got away, the Professor reluctantly. He said the "mandibular action" merited longer observation, and Hopkins inquired, "I wonder how the undertakers of Radiumopolis relish this sort of burial? It certainly saves the mourner consider-

THE POOL OF OBLATION

able in flowers and gravestones, but I don't believe I would cotton to finding my ancestors in the bones of an alligator. It's decidedly composite you know, like as in "The Yarn of the Nancy Bell," when the man who had eaten a good deal of everybody, sang:

" 'Oh, I am the cook and a captain bold,
And the mate of the Nancy brig,
And a bo's'n tight, and a midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig.' "

Long after we had regained the highway, and were on our solitary way to the city we could hear the smashing cymbals, the thudding drums, and the dolorous salutation of the—Well WHAT? Worshippers. Ugh! But we did meet Oogalah and he was in dreadfully low spirits, with a face full of misery, wringing his hands in distress. When he saw the Professor he ran up to him and stood before him in a woe-begone way, quite incapable of explaining his grief. Goritz could make him out fairly well and he asked him "What is the matter? Sick?"

"No! No! Oogalah not sick, but the Big Men have thrown his dead mother to the Serpent!"

Of course we were interested, and Goritz extorted from our friend an astonishing story. Briefly, it was this. Every year at the winter solstice (for later we found that these people possessed a calendar) a ceremony of sacrifice was celebrated at the Pool of Oblation—so I named it. Formerly, many, many decades before this, live men and women had been thrown to the carnivorous saurians, but that had been altered ("by the Progressives," Hopkins suggested), and now the dead only, and not more than a dozen or so, were thrown to them; a reduction in numbers because the beasts some-

times refused some of them, and the bodies corrupted the pool.

Every five years the great lustration of the Forest Temples took place. That was the festival whose beginning and termination we had seen. At these times the whole woodland where the chosen trees are cleared—the Tree Temples—would be traversed, and at each Tree Temple chants would be sung, a black snake left, and some gold offering attached to the tree itself. Shorter pilgrimages occurred four times each year. The snake pasture was kept up as a nursery for the supply of the wood temples, for the snakes did not long survive in the pine forest. This year the Great Lustration had been unaccountably delayed—Oogalah did not know why, but he had heard that the "Big Men" ("A decided catachresis," said the Professor, "for they literally are pygmies"), were very angry about something (my heart jumped with a sudden fear when Goritz told us this).

Oogalah's mother died while we were away with him in the radium country, and the Magistrates of the city, who saw to the gathering of the yearly hecatomb, had *attached* her. Deaths were not numerous, it appeared; the supply of corpses—adequate, that is, for a satisfactory oblation—was not always secured, and a few sheep or goats made up the deficiency, their saurian majesties being at the same time importuned not to resent the substitution. ("A Radiumopolite," commented Hopkins, "may be a sweet morsel, but, under the circumstances, I surely would prefer mutton.")

Oogalah could not tell us much about the "Serpent" (our Crocodilo-Python), or his worship. He said it had always been so, and that the "big ponds" toward the south were full of them. He had traversed these once on a raft, and apparently had got the scare of his life, for the beasts wobbled

about him and, except for an inconvenient satiety at the moment, might have picked him and his companions off like crumbs from a plate. He said too that it was in the savannahs, morasses and meadows of the "southland" that the food for the black snakes in the "serpent pasture" was foraged. ("A typical surviving remnant, doubtless," said the Professor, "of *Cretaceo-Juro-Triassic* scenery.")

Oogalah's communications quite restored his peace of mind, and the gift of a pocket knife from Goritz put him into such blissful acceptance of his domestic bereavement, that the theft of two or three dead mothers would have been thankfully condoned for a similar exchange in the case of each.

We had again reached the city but in darkness. The clouds had thickened in an impenetrable curtain over the Stationary Sun, and the deepest gloom had settled over everything. Forebodings filled my mind. Superstitiously watching every symptom of nature I dreaded the effect of this eclipse on the people, and their cunning little governors, who might at any moment change their deferential behavior into a ruthless malignancy. After their rite of propitiation this darkening of the sun might indicate to them a yet unappeased deity, for, as the Professor had put it, the "Serpent and the Sun had a consentaneous meaning in many old mythologies." Why then was he unappeased? *The Strangers and their profanation of the Shrines.* I always returned to this suspicion with dread. A few moments later my worst fears were confirmed.

We had ascended the western terrace of steps and were immediately beneath the western facade of the Capitol, still to all appearances empty, when a flying figure met us, and in another instant the arms of Ziliah were about Spruce Hopkins' neck, and—my conclusion on the matter can scarcely be ques-

tioned—his were probably about hers. It certainly was a bad case of nerves. Ziliah was in a sort of hysteria, moaning and gasping with (so Hopkins called it) a "*strangle hold*" on his "windpipe," that also quite robbed her lover of the power of utterance. I intervened. The incident might have terminated in their mutual suffocation —so it seemed to me.

The fair and stricken Ziliah told her story.

She had not gone to the Oblation. No; she did not like it. But then there was something else. "Spooce" was in danger, her own "Spooce"—and all of us, *all*. The governors did not like us; they were afraid of us, afraid we might bring more—her father was as bad as the rest of them. And they had found out something, she did not know what, something we had done. We were enemies of the *Serpent*, and—Ziliah's agitation at this juncture quite robbed her narrative of coherency, but in a lucid interval I understood her—we were to be sacrificed; we would be fed to the Serpent!!!

"Zerubbabel and Heliopolis," shouted Hopkins. "You don't mean it? Does she say so? Well so help me—if we don't blow the pack into kingdom come—and twice as far. How much powder have we got left?"

"*The tubes*," I remonstrated.

Hopkins was silent; he remembered their power, and it was not so many hours since something of the same inscrutable influence had nearly brought us all to the verge of extinction.

Never, to the last day of my life, Mr. Link, will I comprehend what happened then. Was it the hand of God—or was it telepathy. WHAT? Ziliah repeated the words I had uttered—exactly. She loosened Hopkins' embrace, she moved stealthily towards me, I saw her deep, sweet eyes raised to mine, her hands closed on my cheeks;

the boreal dusk light that comes from the firmament even when clouded, made her whole face visible. In it shone a strange divination; she repeated the words, "*the tubes*," and then sighed; seized with a sudden inspiration, I forced my mind upon hers; my brain contracted (it felt so), as with a fierce concentration of will I projected the sense of my words and all they implied upon, in, through, the spirit before me—the spirit that itself leaped to their comprehension.

She crouched slightly, moved away, but her soft fingers closed around my hand, and she drew me towards her.

We entered the broad hall of the Capitol, Ziliah holding me tightly and leading me. We turned into a passage-way. At its dark end we stumbled on a half raised arched tile. Ziliah raised it, and seemed sinking below me, as I felt her pull me down. I stooped and felt the edges of an opening. My wary foot detected a stairway. Together we descended and in a dozen or more steps reached the floor of a chamber whose walls seemed only a few feet off on every side of us. Ziliah led me to the corner of this room, pushed upon a wooden door and we entered what proved to be a much larger room. Then telling me to wait, my guide left me. Another instant and a soft radiance filled the place. It came from a radium lamp which Ziliah had uncovered. She pointed to a table in the center of this apartment. On it lay a metal box—a leaden trunk. Ziliah raised its lid. I leaped forward. I already knew what to expect.

In the bottom of the box lay, neatly aligned in rows, thirty leaden tubes, one probably for each of the governors. Here at last in our power, our possession, were the murderous little vials. But were they charged with their life-arresting power? And how to use them? I stood perplexed, and

Ziliah remained motionless by me gazing at me with a mute happiness, as she realized she had attained my wishes. But it was plain that the dear creature knew nothing about them. No—the clever little doctors were not such fools as to popularize their peculiar knowledge, and the dark beauty, tears yet bepearling her long lashes, was just a child before them, *as I was*. But why had they left them here at all? They must have been deposited after the return, for the doctors indubitably had worn them in their girdles when we so inauspiciously dropped onto the road in the pine forest. Did they have a duplicate set? The thought unnerved me.

Now not the least remarkable circumstance in this startling episode was that I had not talked to Ziliah at all, though we understood each other. Telepathy, or sympathy, or suggestion, had done its perfect work so far; not a word had passed between us, but at this obstructive ignorance staring me, so to speak, in the face I opened my mouth.

"Ziliah are these all?"

"ALL," came the answer very quietly, but with a frankness and certainty that assured me.

"Do you know anything about them Ziliah? How they work?"

Ziliah knew nothing. "The —," I understood her to mean the doctors, including her precious father, "will kill you all—Ah! Spooce, too. No! No! Take them away," pointing to the chest, "AWAY —AWAY."

The girl's nerves were reasserting themselves; time was running away too, my friends were deserted, and detection was imminent at any moment. Another glance at the desperate little instruments, and then—*nolens*, *volens*—I picked them up and pushed them under my tunic, so that I felt their cold surfaces chilling my skin.

Then I shook Ziliah and pointed to the door, closing the lid of the chest. She understood. Our way back was as noiseless as our entrance had been. Unless our footprints remained as silent betrayers of our robbery, there was no reason for suspicion, no proof of our misdeeds. Misdeed indeed; it was our SALVATION.

In five minutes I was back with my friends, and Ziliah, reaching the limit of her endurance comfortably fled to her familiar refuge—Hopkins' arms.

Now you may ask incredulously—Why did you not in the first place ask Ziliah where were *the tubes;* why impair the credibility of your story by injecting this transcendental nonsense about—*telepathy.*

I don't know, sir; the facts are just as I have related them.

CHAPTER XIII

Love and Liberty

We soon heard the swarming crowds returning, and before long saw the flat wagons, with the straining goats drawing them, and softly luminous from the radium bulbs held in wickerwork cages, and on them the governors, much agitated and confused. It was really a rout. Panic had seized the people, the guards were in disorder, and they failed to repel the surging masses that rolled up against the rocking chariots. It was a straggling, in some sections a struggling, cortege, and the dominant purpose was to get under cover, for the blackness deepened, the very last glimpses of light had vanished, and a night of storm and wind with a cold rain had blotted out the smiling peacefulness of Radiumopolis.

Fortunately, the construction of the houses was excellent and, except as the wind drove rain through or past the crevices of the board or leathern insertions, their interiors were probably quite dry in storms. The rooms at the Capitol were completely so.

And now the running groups, the populace, the guards, officials hastening variously on their many ways could be heard tramping and surging along, with only occasional ejaculations of impatience or alarm, but all in an evident race and retreat.

I did not wait long with my friends. I knew

Ziliah was with them—*with one.* I clutched my intolerable load closer, I sprang to the eastern terrace, now deserted, and rushed down, suddenly seized with the thought of destroying the infernal machines I carried. It was a *great loss to science* no doubt, but at the moment I felt convinced that once these preposterous weapons were lost to the little doctors, we were safe. I cried in my heart, "Our guns against everything."

So on I flew, and straight out into the serpent pasture, now and again slipping on some coiled or gliding snake to where I knew that well hole lay which marked the departing kick of the celestial visitor who had taught Radiumopolis the trick of making *gold.* It was a deep hole and it was full of water. I reached it. I opened my tunic and from it the bundle of pestiferous little arsenals of magic tumbled, and splashed in the water—and were gone. The pack that fell off Christian's back and rolled backward into the sepulchre could not have been gotten rid of with more satisfaction to that tired pilgrim than I freed myself of those hateful little tubes. Of course afterwards the Professor was dreadfully upset about it. He deplored the "*loss to science.*" "Perhaps," retorted Hopkins, "but—we count too."

I soon returned to the others and found them—minus Ziliah, who had been persuaded to retire to her boudoir—nestling against the corner of the Capitol where there was less wind and rain, enjoying the home gathering of the Sanhedrim, its wives and children, relatives, attendants, and the police.

"My!" gurgled Hopkins under his breath, "such a coop of hens! And the cackling! What's hard to understand is how such poultry govern this land, and how they have the nerve to keep up this detestable religion with its snakes and its croco-

diles; and yet—blame—me—they certainly are on the inside of a good many things, and they surely are on a *Gold Basis*, and some of our best people wouldn't mind swapping all they know, for just that one particular bit of information which will turn a leaden pot into a gold one."

"We must know how, too," grumbled Goritz.

"Well," continued Hopkins, "say the word and we'll revolutionize this country, get into the government, and run the mint."

I was getting impatient with this nonsense, and I said, "Now see here my friends, we are four men against thousands—why talk such rubbish? We're all in danger because of our imprudence but I think we can steer away safely though our difficulties, get the confidence of everyone—perhaps more, and come out, as you might say Spruce, on the Top of the Heap. Ziliah knows what she is talking about and she says we're to be put out of the way. But that perhaps won't be so easy now. I've stolen the tubes and buried them out of sight *forever*."

The three men sprang around me and seized me with one exclamation: "No!"

"Yes I have—they're gone. Come to our rooms and I'll tell you everything. We must use diplomacy, but if they push us to the wall there are our *guns*. The people are accustomed to us and are indifferent. Those little doctors never will let us get out alive if they can help it. There's more than our lives at stake; there's the revelation we shall give to the great world outside of this polar hole—about these strange people, their achievements, their knowledge, above all about that radium mass which may change all the civilization we are acquainted with into something quite different. I do not agree with Goritz, though I can sympathize with his appeal. Science *must know* of this place, and what is here. Science, I say, MUST KNOW."

In a few words I explained what had happened, when we had gotten to our rooms, which still remained undisturbed. I told them of the curious suggestive influence on Ziliah (Hopkins said he "didn't like it"), how we penetrated the subterranean room, how I found and seized those menacing little vials, and how I despatched every one of them into the fathomless mud and water (the Professor compared it with "the crime of the Caliph Omar who burned the Alexandrian Library"), and how now, with Ziliah as an ally, and with our guns, we might turn the tables on the discomfited doctors. "Guess you've taken the sting out of their tails—the little wasps," exclaimed Hopkins.

We did not have to wait long for developments. The storm passed, the light returned and it was much colder. Warmer clothing was given us, and our meals were even more liberal. This excessive hospitality made me suspicious and I insisted that the bearers of the cakes and bread, the wine and milk, the meat and vegetables should partake of a little of each, before us, and this I ingeniously explained to them was the custom of our native countries. They never hesitated, and the courtesy, as they understood it, quite delighted and propitiated them. This too was a part of my rule. I intended to conciliate them so thoroughly that I might be able to make them spies on our enemies—"*pump 'em*," said Hopkins. Ziliah watched diligently; the beloved Spooce was an invaluable hostage.

Our liberty was not interfered with, it seemed extended, and the Professor kept up his unremitting labors in making notes for the voluminous papers he was contemplating, and which he idolatrously regarded as his possible monument in the files of time. Goritz became a confirmed pilferer, and his stock of gold objects, whittlings and fragments grew

dangerously. I remonstrated, but he kept at it. I could not get the wizened little doctors to talk. I addressed them as I met them in the palace in the Hebrew patois I had acquired, and which I was convinced they understood. But no—not a word; a bow, those wrinkling smiles, that deferential obeisance, and the palms of their hands rubbed together meditatively, while the prodigious eyes watched me, I thought, with an unmistakable malice, and—with FEAR.

We seldom saw the ladies of their households which, as Hopkins expressed it, "considering our extreme manly beauty, as compared with the *ALL IN* look of their own matrimonial boobs, is a reflection on their good taste, a proof of their imperfect education. Everybody else likes us," he said. And that was true. We met with the most amiable reception, and Goritz's skill in talking with the Eskimos, and my astounding success with the Hebrew lingo was giving us a vogue that it seemed unreasonable the little rulers did not see was ruinous to their prestige. Could it be possible that they were afraid of us—afraid of our popularity? I thought that they would avail themselves of the discovered thefts of the tree shrines and of the unpropitious storm, on the day of the Oblation, to turn the populace against us as *personae non gratae* to their deity.

But they had not, and the storm was forgotten. It was bewildering, for I felt sure Ziliah was not deceiving me, and that our lives somehow were at stake. Perhaps—perhaps—in that curious complicated psychology of their dwarfed natures, cowardice, deceit, sharpness, superstition, ferocity even, were so mixed up with an enervating feebleness of mind, in spite of their astuteness, that it made them, as Lady Macbeth puts it, "infirm of purpose."

At any rate we would watch our guns, in all senses, and we literally did watch those we owned, carrying them with us, always strapped to our backs, our cartridge belts at our waists, and a part of our dress. I think this alarmed our spies a little.

But now the *crux* of the whole situation came to light. Two things had happened and both of these were known to Ziliah. Ziliah was splendid—the "best ever" said Spruce—"true down to her little toe bone; she turned down her own dad and turned ag'in the Government rather than see us licked. Tell you what, Alfred, I'll take my chances with her, and—it's good-bye to the States."

It was this way. And to begin with, Ziliah's father's first name was Javan, and, because the coincidence is so extraordinary, the names of those little governors, and there were thirty of them, are worth repeating, because again—as the Professor was the first to observe—they can all be found in the first Chapter of the Book of Chronicles, in our Bible. This is the list: Riphath, Kittim, Put, Cush, Pathrusim, Lud, Hul, Joktan, Peleg, Hadad, Naphish, Jeush, Jaalam, Shammah, Shobal, Homan, Uz, Samlah, Bela, Zephi, Zyrah, Ebal, Manahath, Anah, Amram, Mibsam, Gomer, Magog Anamim, Ludim.

I took these down carefully from Ziliah, by word of mouth, and they confirmed all we had inferred of Semitic relations but when later—much later sir, on my return to America—I made the comparison, as the Professor suggested, I was dumbfounded. But I will not stop now to elaborate reflections. My story has already lengthened beyond my expectations, and there is much to recount.

Two things had happened, I have said. Oh, by the way, Mr. Link, I might insert this here—Javan, Ziliah's father, encouraged his daughter's intimacy

with Hopkins; he thought it would lead to something. It did. As Hopkins put it, "it was the Guy who put the *eat* in *Beat* it."

The two things were—the theft of the tubes had been discovered, and there had been a Council held —a "*pow-wow*" according to Spruce, in which Javan threw a bomb into the deliberations for our destruction because he connected what he had to say at the "pow-wow" with the disappearance of the little wizard wands. A wonderful denouement was at hand. It all came about as follows:

The excursion through the pine tree shrines showed a considerable damage, and the inspectors were sure the mischief had been perpetrated by us. Our tracks were unmistakable; they found our camps, and they noted that the pillaging had been done, as it were, yesterday. Their indignation was great, but, as the detection of the outrage was actually unnoticed by the multitude, and had only come to the knowledge of the little doctors—the Sanhedrim as we had called them—and had not then been seriously considered at first, except by a few leaders—apparently the older and shrewder men, Put and Hul, Peleg, Hadad and Javan, himself, the President—it was concluded to keep still about it, and that nothing should be done until they had returned. But the outrage, as they considered it, made them rather anxious as to the state of mind of the insulted serpent and tree deities—the *numina* of their unseen world. Propitiation was in order, and they had taken pains to visit all the shrines, repair the mischief, attach new offerings, sing and dance and pray, and go through a snake ceremonial with the doctors as masters of the ceremony, as indeed these odd creatures were really priests to the nation.

They talked a great deal about it among them-

selves, but they were dreadfully bothered by Javan's scruples as to touching us, and all because he recalled an ancient prophecy of a fall from the clouds of a beggar-like man, who would not know their language, and who would bring them a new wisdom, and who would be their King.

Now it seems this ancient prophecy was in their archives, as you might say, and action in our case was to be delayed until its exact portents or contents were ascertained. There were queer coincidences in the matter. Our descent from the top of the pine tree, albeit awkward and a little unseemly, was a good deal like a drop from the clouds. *It seemed so to them.* Our beggarly condition was really shamefully clear. Then we did not speak their language, and as to the new wisdom, the Professor's harangue rather filled the bill there, and, in spite of themselves, his red hair had impressed them, *as it did everybody else.*

Certainly there were or might be discrepancies. There were four of us for instance; we had been in the wood some time—desecrating it too, a profanation inconceivable in a future King—a heaven-sent King! These considerations cheered them greatly, for really the little fellows did not wish to abdicate. So they mulled these things over and fixed their plans very craftily. They'd get back, ignore us, seem to forget all about us, hunt up the precious document, and, if they came to the conclusion to "*do us*," as Hopkins said, the affair would be kept very secret, and—their white fingers clasped the ominous tubes as they raised them significantly over their big heads—*they wouldn't be long about it either.*

At the return to Radiumopolis Javan heard from Ziliah's own lips—very soon, I suppose, after she lifted him up in her arms on the terrace steps—what a dreadful state her heart was in over Spooce, and

Javan ("perfidious dad," Hopkins called him) simpered, sniggered, and encouraged her attachment. But Ziliah possessed some feminine acuteness—"No piker, *she*," declared Hopkins—and she was not many minutes in finding out the true position of affairs; viz., the enmity of the Directorate, the existing government, for us. She was in an agony of fear, and, aflame with her love, she had met us and told me of our danger. Then, sir, as you may incredulously recall, I did that telepathic act, and cleared away the most formidable obstacle in our way.

From that moment Ziliah was ours, every heart beat, every brain pulse was for us. She certainly *played* her father, but we had no intentions against his life, and it was just simply immolation for us all in his case, as the coterie would have sent us on the long road in a hurry, and then all this strange tale would never have entranced your ears. Ziliah, as the verdict of the world will pronounce, chose the better part. Her devotion led us into the light of deliverance.

The old record of the prophecy was brought to light. It actually was engraved on a gold tablet. That showed, sir, that the knowledge of transmutation was over a hundred years old in Krocker Land, for, as you will learn, there is no mining for gold in Krocker Land; that mother lode which the Professor predicted, as far as we know is a dream only. All the gold in Krocker Land comes from Radium Transmutation.

Ziliah saw the tablet, she heard it read; for that matter she read it herself ("A twentieth century woman and no mistake," was Hopkins' tribute to her sagacity), and now what I tell you, sir, will hardly be believed. It has such a fabulous fairy-like sound.

The prophecy read thus: The future King would

fall from the sky, in the shape of a man dressed in rags, with hair red like blood, with a strange language on his tongue, and "he KILLS with THUNDER."

That, sir, brought our guns and the Professor into the drama, and swept the stakes into our hands. You shall see.

The prophecy did mightily disturb the council. They convened in their state chamber, and argued it out circumstantially, and Ziliah, conveniently disposed for the revelations to be expected, listened. The upshot of their deliberations was that there was much difference of opinion, with a preponderant feeling that the Professor was a dangerous probability. Had we fallen from the sky, or just dropped out of the branches of the tree, and, if that was our first appearance how about the thefts? Yes—yes—the thefts, and the traces of our previous camps, and then the *killing with thunder?* There was some ill-natured derisive and weak giggling over this. Thunder indeed!

The upshot of it all was that Javan was deputed to keep an eye on us, and probably the best thing to do, taking a strictly conservative view of the matter was to— Ziliah didn't catch this, but when I told her Hopkins, he winked assertively and drew the forefinger of his ring hand across his throat, and said nothing.

Anyhow the little elders came out from the conference, looking greatly satisfied, very benignant, and were happily garrulous. But the second event was the discovery of the disappearance of the tubes. It seemed that some recuperative effect was sought for in thus storing them in the metallic box in the subterranean chamber, but —WHAT? And whether other agents were present in the box will never be known, as indeed the mystery of those tubes is itself a closed

chapter, unless forsooth the Professor elicits the information as to their fabrication, by reason of his present control of the scientific resources— But pardon me, I anticipate.

The tubes had been placed in the chest almost instantly after the re-entrance of the cortege into the Capitol. A literal translation of Ziliah's remark as to the need of this would be that they were "*dying out.*"

You can imagine Javan's despair, consternation, and amazement. Apparently there were no more of these stupifying inventions handy, and the Sanhedrim were really at their wits' end. At this juncture Ziliah became a perfect demon of suggestion. Hopkins' enthusiastic submission to her charms inflamed her with a sprightliness of mind that kept us busy too, and won our case. Ziliah knew that the citizens of Radiumopolis, which practically was Krocker Land, the outlying agricultural sections being little else than a *diaspora* of Radiumopolis itself, were not so loyally disposed towards the exclusive Areopagus on Capitol Hill, and that some shock of wonderment that might establish our supernatural origin would solve the *impasse*, and give us the upper hand, for literally there was now no way out of the dilemma but for us to RULE.

Ziliah conceived the idea of our subverting the reigning government as quickly as we had reached the same conclusion, and Hopkins was not slow to sharpen her perceptions. But *she* formed the plan of our *coup d'etat.* We had thought (and the Professor was as deeply implicated as any of us, he realized our plight and for once worldly aims gripped and diverted his mind) to make a public appeal to the people or else insidiously foment discontent, lead an attack on the now defenceless governors, seize the throne, as it

were, and establish the dynasty of Hlmath Bjornsen the First.

At first blush the Professor seemed greatly puzzled and unwilling, and his bulging eyes stared at us with blank misgivings. But when the rigor of our situation was forced upon him, with the compelling *suadente potestas* of his red hair, and its felicitous conjunction with aboriginal prophecy, he worked himself into a real glee over it that was delightful. To Hopkins there was something so macaronic and side-splitting about this role of the Professor's, that he could scarcely look at his half rueful, absorbed expression, his odd mouth, the prodigious ears, and the coronal splendor of his hair, without being overcome with a badly concealed merriment that might have turned our plans awry with anyone less essentially good-natured than the Professor.

Of course we improved our popularity, and we put the Professor through ambulatory excursions that must have tired his legs. From the first the people had "cottoned" to him (*fide* Hopkins), and we wanted them to become intimate with their future KING. Certainly it seemed like a huge joke.

Everything was coming our way. The governors had actually become afraid of us. We were no longer confined to the Capitol. We fascinated our guards by giving them all the trinkets we could find about us, and Goritz and I talked constantly with the people. The Sanhedrim might have turned the people against us by revealing our thefts, but somehow they did not try it. They did not even enter our rooms for proof. I think we began to despise them. They had a secretive, feeble way that too plainly advertised their impotence. It was evident indeed that some fatal collapse in their authority was imminent, and they did not have the

miraculous tubes to reinstate themselves. Nothing could have withstood them then. Between the prophecy and the loss of the tubes they were desperate. Our sedition prospered in the meanwhile.

Suddenly it occurred to me that their apathy and shrinking avoidance of a collision meant mischief. It might be ominous. Were they—the thought transfixed me with horror—were they secretly at work repairing their loss, MAKING OTHER TUBES? Of course they were; in the light of this suggestion their apparent timidity was explained. It was not timidity. Nay, it was just a delicate, artful duplicity that was fooling us. Ziliah must find out and then one way or another we must test the situation. Of course the prophecy that Ziliah had recounted to us was constantly the keynote of our plans. To lose our chance now would be madness.

And Ziliah? She wheedled Javan and Put, and Cush, and Hul, and the rest successfully. They thought she was keeping us quiet, and they thought too their own inoffensiveness was blinding us. Ah ha! *It was*—while they contrived their devilish weapons anew. They had made no outcry when they found them gone. That might have liberated the people of their fear for themselves. But was Ziliah possibly playing us false? There was or certainly had been a countermine at work and she had failed to detect it. These foxy patriarchs were fooling our own spy in their camp, or again—*was Ziliah false?*

Well sir, Ziliah was "straight as a string and true as gold," to quote Hopkins. She knew nothing about the making of the new tubes, but she would find out. Her terror over this new turn in the affair was greater than our own, her surprise too. Ah, sir, she knew what those tubes meant, what they could do!

She soon returned to me—it was easy enough, and it was easy to do it unnoticed. Javan trusted her implicitly, and indeed she and I had been somewhat hoodwinked by him. Ziliah confirmed my suspicions. The new tubes were indeed under way. The *eukairia*, the "nick of time," had come. We must strike. Then it was that Ziliah told us HOW.

We were to take on the grand air, assert our provenance from Heaven, repeat the prophecy from the tablet, call the Professor *Shamlah*, and threaten destruction if the Sanhedrim did not receive us at once, see that our thunder bolts were ready, and use them. The message, to be taken by Ziliah, would admit that our manners had been humble and that Shamlah had concealed his mission. But delay would be cut short. The time for his royal assumption was at hand. We would come to them with our thunder tubes and talk with them; and if our overture was rejected we would go to the people and show our power.

That was our ultimatum; batteries on both sides were now unmasked and the issue defined. What we needed just then were theatrical properties, some chromatic detonating explosions, fireworks, skyrockets, roman candles, flower-pots, fire-fizzes of any sort that would give us a supernatural flavor. As Hopkins said, just one night's Coney Island Payne's Fireworks outfit, and what wasn't ours in the joint, wouldn't be worth having. But—*we had only our guns*. That however was a good deal.

Ziliah returned the answer of the Conventicle. They would not see us just now, *later*, perhaps in fourteen *settas*, which meant, in our time, about a week. Oh ho! That was the limit of our sufferance. In a week they would meet us *on their own terms*. The crisis had come.

It was not half an hour later that Goritz, Hopkins, the Professor and myself, as faultlessly attired as our wardrobe and toilet facilities permitted, marched from our abode in the city, down the great highway. Our guns were in our arms, clasped tightly to our chests, and all the ammunition we possessed was loaded in our cartridge belts and pockets. We were instantly noticed and numerously attended. We entered the serpent pasture, at the eastern end, and walked to the eastern terrace of steps, and up these to the courtyard above. We were seen. Men and women, girls and boys, in a desultory manner at first, then in hastening groups, emerged from the Capitol and, among them a few of the little rulers. The rumor of attack spread.

From the houses of the city, its looms and barns, the workshops and bakeries, its gardens, the cloth manufactories, the metal shops, the curious small people gathered, and with them the larger race from near and far, while the idle and loafing contingent, always large and drifting instinctively towards every new incident, hastened in mirthful or expectant groups, pouring along behind us. Each fresh accession stimulated a wider circle of attention, until it almost seemed as if the populace were following us *en masse*. They overflowed the road, they dispersed over the meadow land appropriated to snakes, they clambered up on the dilapidated cutches, where the snakes congregated and clustered, in gaping crews, on the steps of the terrace. Their humor seemed propitious. The peculiar gaiety that characterized them when we were brought to Radiumopolis, dampened or made a little grave by wonder, again affected them that day, but it was freer and more hospitable, and I think they already appreciated the situation. Goritz and I had been rather industrious dissemina-

tors of mischief—"*Semeurs d'emeute,*" Antoine said.

When we came to the last step of the terrace we separated. The Professor took a central position, and the light luckily turned his splendid coiffure into a garnet glory that must have transported the audience around us. Goritz and Hopkins flanked him, I stood somewhat to one side. We all held our guns—magazine rifles—but the Professor, it was agreed, should remain statuesque and motionless, only succoring us at any critical juncture. I have a splendid voice, I proposed to use it.

By this time the throng in the doorway of the Capitol almost blocked it. The dignitaries were coming out quickly and the magistrates from the wards of the city were arriving, but all somewhat *en deshabille.* Their court robes were forgotten, or too hastily deserted, and their appearance assumed an absurdly shrunken manner and tenuity. We very certainly outclassed them. The Professor, *par excellence,* was magnificent. The people measured the spectacular effect and, I guess, shrewdly preferred our "make-up."

I began my demand. I spoke for the SON of THUNDER, and I spoke of the prophecy which described his coming to rule his people, and then, it was a master stroke which almost unnerved my friends, knocked the Directory plumb off its feet, and thunderstruck the people, *I showed the golden tablet* (Ziliah's stroke), and read it. By this time I had acquired fairly well the Hebrew dialect of these people, and they understood me. I pointed to the Professor who, responding to some histrionic impulse, which none of us had even suspected in him, raised his hands as if invoking the heavens, and then bowed to me, to Goritz, to Hopkins, and in unimpeachable—English, said in a loud domineering tone,

"REVEAL MY POWER—FIRE!"

Now this was absolutely an improvisation. We had not planned the affair exactly in that way, but we were on the *qui vive* (Johnnies-on-the-spot, averred Hopkins), and off went the whole magazine of guns in a glorious unison. It was really immense, coming as it did upon the heels of the prediction, that—*he kills with his thunder*. Only we hadn't killed anything. And then the Professor by another sublime intuition filled the required bill. It was nearing spring time and the reinforcement of the light and heat from the diurnal sun was beginning to be felt. Some straggling Arctic gulls crossed the sky. The Professor was a fair shot. The accentuation of a supreme moment nerved his arm, brightened his eye, and put the force of precision in his aim. He fired—a gull fluttered to the ground almost at our feet—another shot, and a second bird flopped actually upon the heads of the dismayed councillors, who were now in a fine frenzy of agitation.

The mercurial disposition of semi-civilized people and that contagion of admiration which, as Le Bon has shown, infects a mob, as with the sharp upward rush of a fire fanned by high winds, had an invincible illustration then and there. At first there was a silence; as if shocked into dumbness by the inexplicable occurrence, or bewildered by a confusion of responses they could not define, they for a moment awaited direction. *It came.* Oogalah, in the very first rank of the attendant crowds, shouted with hoarse exultation:

"*PEEUK—PEEUK—PEEUK.*"

Then came the reaction of release from incertitude, and the assemblage caught the sound—Nay, the word, and from side to side, to and fro, hither, thither, the cry doubled and redoubled, until it almost seemed as if the convulsed nation would

start some riotous stampede in favor of that darling, red-headed, heaven-sent, death-dealing sovereign. And the Professor, animated by I know not what *elan* of conquest, seized his rifle in both hands, and holding it horizontally before him, stepped forward against the heterogeneous throng of courtiers, officials, and Areopagites that crammed every inch of space in front of the Capitol, as if he were the *Demiurge of Destruction.* In a fright they gave way, and in the path thus made we followed. There was nothing else to do, although this demonstration to me seemed unaccountable and dangerous, as it might lead to some unexpected disaster and an anticlimax of ridicule and repulsion. With the Professor it was just an involuntary spasm of stage play, with no clear purpose outlined or even seen in it. Behind us in the regurgitant host I could hear the stentorian roars of Oogalah. This unexpected and vociferous ally after all had a grudge to gratify; he had not altogether forgotten his inviscerated mother. His appeals were quite in favor of the new allegiance. You see, sir, it was an orgulous moment for the Professor, and I don't think he knew exactly what he was about.

But Luck, which after all favors a good many more people than fools, intervened. We had gotten rather tightly entrapped in the brigades about the Capitol, when we were met by a huddle of the patriarchs, themselves somewhat violently jostled by the pushing citizens. Here were Javan, and Put, and Hul, Peleg, Hadad, the head men, and they presented a very sorry and despoiled appearance. Their nervous white hands ran over their straggling beards in piteous perplexity, and, lacking the surplusage of their state regalia, they appeared even more contemptible than depressed.

Knowing me best and perhaps too dismayed by the flaming presence of the *Pretender* himself,

Javan literally flew to my arms and urged clemency. It was complete *capitulation.* I knew it. But the victory must be more crushing. The last struggle of the victim must be squelched. It had occurred to me before that an epic seriousness, if not majesty, might be given to our high-handed pretensions by shooting down the Crocodilo-Python effigies at the corners of the palace. The risk might be considerable, and then again it might be very little, with tremendous compensating benefits if the dice fell the right way. How would the people take it? I did not know. This moment of irresolution permitted something to happen which gave us the upper hand most beautifully, eliminated violence, and struck the keynote of a perfect CONCILIATION.

Ziliah, ardent, arrayed superbly, with her copious dark hair bound up, as was the fashion of the upper-class women, with the little gold serpents, wearing the gold caps on her knees, her ankles encased in gold filagree that rose half way up the naked leg, her feet in golden sandals, and swathed somehow in a soft delicate blue tunic covering her thighs and body, but falling away from the pillar-like neck and firmly moulded breasts, a vision of picturesque loveliness, sprang amongst us. Her face was flushed by excitement but radiant in smiles. And of course she wore the golden belt with its serpent buckle.

She flung her arms around the Professor, kissed him on both cheeks, salaamed, bending her knees to the ground with a wonderful, unstudied grace. Then she took her astonished father's hand and led that little gentleman forward, and then Put, and Hul, Peleg and Hadad—the remaining elders, arrived, but had shrunk from the presentation. Then Ziliah spoke. Her voice was high keyed, but musical, and had a soaring quality in it that carried

far. Silence fell and the intensity of the psychological moment made me wonder at the girl's prescience.

"Father, make peace with these men. They bring us a New Wisdom. We shall be happy with them. Let the Son of Thunder (my eyes at that instant fell on Hopkins; he was visibly squirming in an agony of suppressed mirth at the designation, but the Professor retained a most noble immobility) be your guide, your companion. These men will all be brothers to us, and this man (she knelt again at the feet of Hopkins, who seized her in his arms, and lifted her to his face) will be my husband." Javan's astonishment then was a study.

I was transported, and I rushed in to the *rapprochement*, as she ended, with fresh promises of friendship.

Nothing would be disturbed, nothing changed. We came to them strangers from the clouds, we would bless them with new powers. The Great Serpent still should reign.

At all this there was a great shouting, a tempest of approving comment, and the landslide of public endorsement overwhelmed the council. The retreating or abashed or cowardly members of "the Syndicate of Old Toddlers," as Hopkins said, issued from their niches in the crowd, and Javan, caught in an *enjambment* from which he could not extricate his party, surrendered. He came forward, and after him came Put, Hul, Peleg, Hadad; and the Professor, with a fine urbanity that capped the climax and swept away all traces of resentment or repugnance, fell on their necks, so to speak, though the act had to be rather sedately done for he would incontinently have knocked them down. It had a delightfully funny and *picaresque* effect and I again felt, as I had felt hundreds of times before, that it all was a dream

and unreal. The string as it lengthened embraced the whole Areopagus, and this fraternal ceremony evidently, as Hopkins noted, "tickled the little old fellow to death."

They were all there: Riphath, Kittim, Cush, Pathrusim, Lud, Hul, Joktan, Naphish, Jeush, Jaalam, Shammah, Shobal, Homan, Uz, Samlah, Bela, Zephi, Zerah, Ebal, Manahath, Anah, Amram Mibsam, Gomer, Magog, Anamim, Ludim. I am sure I did not know their identity; I counted them, thirty in all. That consummated matters and set Professor Hlmath Bjornsen of Christiania on the throne of Radiumopolis in KROCKER LAND.

Javan and the other doctors softened beautifully, and actually expanded into a self-satisfied body of patronage and allegiance. The Professor was "shown through" the Capitol, and he threaded its maze of compartments, saw its Council Chamber, enriched with gold, hung with gaudy rugs, and found there the as yet unoccupied clumsy and incalculably valuable gold throne which we had seen shaking and rattling in the procession, itself a relic of some old time, when this isolated kingdom had had a king, but was young compared to that still more remote time when "the stranger" taught that king's progenitor the miracle of making gold.

From it now, under the aegis of its hideous device, the rearing Crocodilo-Python, our dear Professor was to dispense justice to the Radiumopolites. Of a truth it was an almost inconceivable *denouement.* What would, what could, the Professor's colleagues at the University say, and by what insupportable hypothesis could they explain this transmutation?

And there was to be a Coronation! Oh yes. Javan and the rest of the Fathers had conspired successfully there; indeed the fuss of its preparation and the importance of their parts in its conduct

had now really made them inanely jubilant over the whole revolution in state affairs.

Hopkins and I walking eastward along the broad highway over which we had entered Radiumopolis, out into that fair Valley of Rasselas which was again stirring with the field life of the advancing spring, talked rather earnestly of our predicament, for, after all, predicament it was. How were we to get home and tell our story? We were to be made a good deal of here but—could we escape? Goritz had become eager to return with his gold "souvenirs" (never inquired for), with his radium, with the secret of making gold, if he could learn it. That was yet concealed and, much more important, so were the tubes. Those balloons, the radium-lit cave in the Deer Fels. And there was the great ethnic wonder of the people themselves, the marvel of the Stationary Sun, the radium country! It was impossible to reconcile ourselves to a lifelong immurement in this monotony. Science must break through into this chrysalis of wonders. It was our bounden duty to bring *her* here. But literally we were captives; the hocus-pocus of our descent from the sky would not let us demean ourselves in ordinary ways (in spite of past precedents of the vulgarity on the part of heaven-descended kings) and we began to see we had prepared a dilemma for ourselves which might end more fatally than the enmity of the little doctors had threatened.

Now all was changed, and like flies in honey were we hopelessly entangled. Perhaps the most fortunate of us all was Spruce Hopkins himself, who frankly loved Ziliah; but even he wanted to "vamoose" and take his bride with him, for he thought she would "take the edge off the jolliest swell ladies anywhere." The Professor, now the joke was over and our necks safe, was sick to death of his role, and only extracted a comforting morsel

of pleasure from it in its possibility of opening to him the few but very peculiar secrets of physics and chemistry which the Faculty of Radiumopolis monopolized—monopolized too, we learned, by a rigid system of verbal transmission. And then our thunder! It wouldn't last for ever; and our celestial powers would fail conclusively in creating cartridges on demand, owing to the unscrupulous fondness on the part of the Radiumopolites, which was having easily foreseen and disastrous consequences. Our supply was shrinking fast. We adopted the expedient of delegating the role of *Thunderer* to the Professor, which saved shot, or at least extended the usefulness of our arsenal. The peaceful nature of the Professor was, however, so far exasperated by the improvident urgency of his subjects that he confessed to a murderous inclination to shoot them at the same time. If any one of us got away he would need his gun and ammunition and much more—a stock of provisions too, and transportation. We both felt pretty blue.

Hopkins: "One of us must make a break soon."

I: "Well you certainly can't. Your family's here now."

Hopkins: "Ziliah's a sport. She might just prove to be the guy to put *light* in flight. Besides I could tell her some things about the way we live in New York that might increase her desire to travel."

I: "But we came from Heaven!"

Hopkins: "Yes, I know—we're the angelic sort. Say, if I wanted to desert Ziliah—and I don't—I could play up the Lohengrin gag. Get her to ask questions, get mad about it—and *quit*."

I: "Easier said than done."

Hopkins: "There's no chance to skip out up here in this everlasting daylight."

I: "Pshaw! That isn't it. Think of the journey back; think of the ice pack."

Hopkins: "If we could only wireless back for a relief expedition."

I: "*If.*"

We turned back, gloomy and dispirited. When we reached Radiumopolis we found King Hlmath Bjornsen thundering from the Capitol and Goritz—gone.

CHAPTER XIV

Goritz's Death and the Gold Makers

I skip the coronation and enthronement of King Hlmath Bjornsen of Krocker Land in Radiumopolis, because the King asked me to do so in my last interview with him. He wishes to reserve its features for his great book. He thinks that the ceremonies, taken in connection with many other considerations prove that the Krocker Land culture ties together a number of ancestral ethnic cults, and that there is good reason to believe that the mixture of semi-savage practices, the archaic or nepionic status of society, the advanced language, the peculiar acquisitions of the patrician class, their specialized though limited knowledge, the vitality of the serpent-monster worship taken in connection with the biological fact of a partial, at any rate, survival of mesozoic conditions in limited topographic basins, as seen in the Saurian Sea, in the chain of swamps beyond the Pool of Oblation, and especially in the undeniable and formidable fact of the existence of the Crocodilo-Python, an animal quite unlike any known saurian, indicate what he terms the concatenated debris of a series of overlaid civilizations and that its complete interpretation will carry us back to the probable origin of *Homo sapiens* and the Garden of Eden, restricted of course to a purely naturalistic conception. (Er-

rickson took a long breath, and then—he was off again.)

The geological features of this polar pit, its stepped or terraced conformation, the extraordinary igneous activity revealed beneath it and the disclosure herein of immense endomorphic radium deposits, combined with unparalleled meteorological phenomena are also reserved by the Professor, the King, for personal and elaborate treatment. With the especial opportunities now available the Prof—the King (It's difficult for me to be consistent in alluding to my old friend) will prosecute inquiry, so far as his official duties permit, but through me, Mr. Link, he most fervently implores scientific recognition of the facts so far recorded in this narrative, and immediate scientific interposition in his behalf and cooperation for his assistance. (Erickson again paused and allowed the full meaning of his elongated statements to penetrate my purely secular mind.)

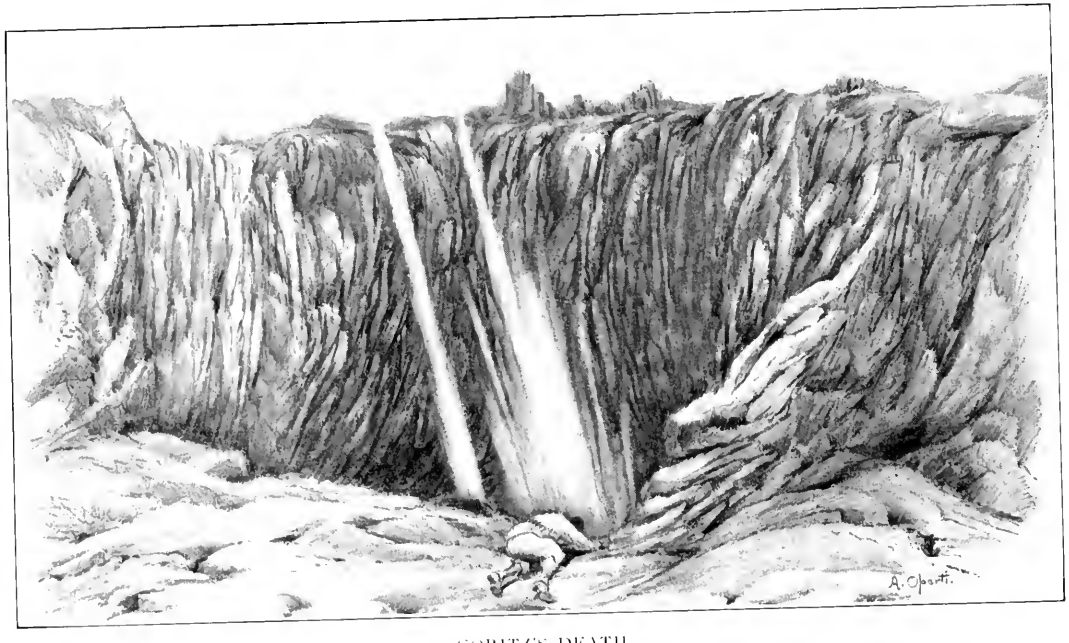
However, this in passing, Mr. Link. I will recur to it. Let me resume my story, omitting under the foregoing stipulations any description of the Professor's enthronement. I am indeed approaching the moment of my own hazardous dash from Krocker Land for the outer world.

Goritz, I said, had disappeared. It seems he had not been seen for many *settas*—setta is equivalent to about twelve hours. Hopkins and I had been away scouring the countryside, and knew nothing of Goritz's whereabouts. I have already hinted at his restlessness, moodiness, and his unceasing hunt for gold. Latterly this had become changed into an intense eagerness to revisit the radium country with Oolagah to collect radium.

We had not yet seen the process of transmutation, certain as we were as to its accomplishment and knowledge of the same among the Radium-

opolites, a knowledge probably limited to the doctors. Goritz had a theory as to the illimitable power of radium to effect this conversion. He was mistaken. He was dissatisfied with the pieces we had been given—oxidized lumps holding the unchanged metal in their centers—and was always teasing Oogalah to take him again to the radium valley or chasm. Oogalah refused. I think he did not relish Goritz's company. Now Hopkins and I believed Goritz harbored the intention to gather his belongings at a favorable moment, mostly the gold objects and the radium, and, trusting blindly in his great strength, experience, and resources, to force his way back to the Krocker Land Rim, regain the coast, hunt up the naphtha launch and possibly make some attempt to sail back to Point Barrow. It was sheer madness. We had had few occasions to argue it with him, as he rather avoided us, and his secretiveness and stealthy activity strengthened our suspicions. Hopkins half feared the unfortunate man was losing his mind.

But when we learned of his absence—we were all rather marked men now in Radiumopolis and our goings and comings were minutely noticed—I suspected at once he had tried to get to the radium fields alone and had been lost or destroyed there. Taking Oogalah, now acting under orders, Hopkins and I started out. We reached the peridotite hills which afforded us such welcome relief against the inordinate misery of our heads, that arose from the powerful emanations of the region of the granite ledges. No traces of our missing friend appeared. Oogalah left us, passing through the gateway between the sulphur patches, and made straight for the edge of the cliffside that broke down into the unapproachable and impossible crevice. Beyond the farthest point he dared to penetrate lay the prostrate body of Antoine Goritz, our former



GORITZ'S DEATH

leader, dead. Oogalah could see him plainly, but he hesitated to try to reach him, and it would have been impossible for him alone to have carried this youthful giant back. Goritz's head was towards Oogalah coming from the east. He had fallen headlong, a little crumpled up, as if in convulsions when he fell, and in his hands, still clutched in an irretractable deathgrip, were two lumps of radium.

Sorrowfully Hopkins and I turned back, followed by the mute but wondering Eskimo. We could not possibly have recovered the body then, but we hoped to later. We had already heard that the workers in radium, the Gold Makers, were like Oogalah immunized or less sensitive to its paralyzing influence, and with some of these men we hoped the recovery could be made. We noticed on this sad errand that our own susceptibility had changed, that it deterred us less, just as for months past the irritation of the eyes from the peculiar light of the land had passed away, which before, in the Deer Fels, even in the Pine Tree Gredin, had afflicted us. So, reluctantly we returned, fully assured by Oogalah that with assistance from some of the gold makers the body could be withdrawn. And that, sir, partially led to our second visit to the village of the Gold Makers.

That gold was made by some miraculous power, aided by some peculiar skill in the Radiumopolites, we had convinced ourselves, before we reached that city. Since then the spectacle of the Capitol, the apparent extravagance of the use of gold in decoration and in apparel, and even in the appurtenances of the rooms and homes of the officers of the city, the shockingly hideous Crocodilo-Python effigies on the palace, and that impossible, realistic creation of the Serpent-Throne in which the Professor sat at the time of his triumphant coronation, and Ziliah's story and the equally credible narrations of Oogalah

confirmed specifically our suspicions. But we had never seen it made, nor even found in the industries of the city any trace of its manufacture. That the odd encounter of ours with the sphalerite in the limestone cave of the Deer Fels, when the convocation of little men drifted down from the sky, borne by those incommensurable balloons (and, by the way, we had never since seen a balloon in use or idle) had something to do with gold making, we were positive.

Since our arrival and establishment in the city we had heard of the Gold Makers. It was for them that Oogalah explored the radium fields near the Crater of Everlasting Light. Oogalah told us most of what we learned about them. They were a different people again from either the Eskimo or the Hebrew type in the city of Radiumopolis, and the Valley of Rasselas. They lived in a secluded community many miles away from Radiumopolis, and seldom visited the city, though they occasionally intermarried with the comely Eskimo girls or the larger women of the small race. When we inquired the cause of their isolation Oogalah said the *mines* were where they were to be found, and the burial grounds.

The last named excited our wonder, but Oogalah was vague on the subject and seemingly uninterested. He did exhibit some enthusiasm over his recollections of the wildness and beauty of the country where the Gold Makers lived and worked, and mentioned a mighty river there. This was the river that issued from the Canon of Promise, the effluent from the Saurian Sea, which, as I have said, again turned westward and through another savage defile entered the Kara Sea. That river I named "*Homeward Bound*," for by it I came out.

Well, the Professor, after his accession, expressed the strongest desire to see the Gold Makers and

their country, and said that we all must accompany him. For the Professor had acquired a little knowledge of the language, and with me as interpreter he got on famously, and told the Council of wise men that he was writing a book about them, and after they had mastered the idea, for among their other trivialities they had no books, no writings of any sort, they took to it immensely. This appeal to their vanity—magalomania literally and figuratively—was a great stroke. Bjornsen will find out all their knowledge before he abdicates.

So it very soon materialized that we should be shown the Gold Makers. (This was some time before Goritz's death.) It was a picturesque trip. I shall never forget it, and for good reasons. It started me on my way home.

The Professor, Goritz, Hopkins, myself, and the chief men of the Senate, Javan, Put, Hul, Peleg and Hadad, made up the party with the guard, drivers and a few attendants. We went in their odd wooden-wheeled jaunting cars, pulled by the very lively and entertaining rams.

It would form an appealing and pleasant study for me to describe the Junta of Radiumopolis—those thirty humorous little figures, with the sedate, old, and variously featured faces, a galaxy of physiognomies that embraced good nature, cunning, sullenness, querulous self importance, feebleness, gravity, benevolence (more in the seeming than in the reality, I take it) spitefulness, apathy, fussiness, dullness, alertness, sympathy, cruelty, perhaps sternness, and above all a mannerism of profundity unspeakably amusing. Their physique is hopeless, for they have pin bodies and have pin heads, as Hopkins described them, and their off-the-center look with their top-heavy heads and bowed shoulders make a mannikin effect, ludicrous and grotesque. All are dark.

But while we are on our way to the Gold Makers, through the open flowering meads and broad pastures and arable acres of the Rasselas Valley, I will try very briefly—*in staccato*—to put before you Javan, Put, Hul, Peleg and Hadad.

Javan, the father of Ziliah, was by far the best looking, and generally the best formed. His face was really handsome, and his beard made no false claim to being one. It was full and flowing. His eyes were large, glowing and passionate. He smiled too much, and a "few crowns and bridges made from home material would have benefited his mouth organ," said Hopkins. His cheeks were hollow and pale, but the positive beauty of the broad white brow seemed to compensate for all other defects.

Put was a rather tall man, under the restricted sense of long and short as applied to these gentlemen, and nearly bald. His nose was a more modest creation that those of most of his colleagues, but his mouth, in so small a face, was portentous. Nature by some ineptitude had almost omitted his ears, and his eyes had a glassy and fixed stare (when not concealed by the official goggles), but the forlorn remnant of some forgotten smile had become fastened in his face, which actually helped the artificial effect of his eyes to the point of making you almost believe he was of wood or plaster, and not of flesh and blood. Hopkins quoted the Bab Ballad verse, which runs,

" 'The imp with yell unearthly-wild,
Threw off his dark enclosure:
His dauntless victim looked and smiled
With singular composure.
For hours he tried to daunt the youth,
For days indeed, but vainly—
The stripling smiled! to tell the truth
The stripling smiled inanely.' "

Hull was somewhat shorter but he was a distinct analogue to Put, with most of Put's eccentricities, softened, by no means to the point of extinction, but so far as to make him a laughable simulacrum.

Peleg was the best example of this small Semitic people in the thirty Areopagites. He was really muscular in a way, well developed, with a hawk's eye, and a severity that would require, I surmised, very little provocation to turn it into ferocity. His head seemed less ponderous, he carried it straighter, and a deeper glow of redness in his face imparted to him a humanity denied by the parchment-like texture of his fellows. His beard too, was full and his hair really rich and luxuriant. I think he would have proven a firm friend.

Hadad was an anomaly. He was fat. Hopkins called him "the Alderman"; he was the presumably happy possessor of a so-called corporation (as Hopkins put it, "a Trust individualized as an abdomen") , and his voice and laugh were musical. Generally I don't insist on the association, but I have found it noticeable. Hadad had pop-eyes and an incorrigible habit of spitting. He seemed loquacious, and he usually could be found in the midst of any discussion.

This conventionalized description might produce a wrong impression. These little men did not dress in coat, vest and pants. Figure them in yellow or blue tunics falling well below the knees, sometimes in a sort of violet cassock, either bound with the rococo gold belt and its conspicuous gold buckle, with leggings or buskins, with the beehive hat, and all this apparel on state occasions loaded with gold chains. You can conceive that they presented a most unusual appearance, even one of some dignity, though it must be confessed their relatively large noses undeniably depraved it with a vaudeville effect. Hopkins never could get over this impression.

"Alfred, if I could ship 'em, as they stand, on the hoof so to speak, to New York!—sign a contract as manager, and bill 'em for a tour of the States, my financial horizon would be cloudless. Eh?"

The defects of these diminutive people seemed increased by contrast with the taller race, who were well made, normal in every way, and whose women were most pleasing. And as regards the ladies of the small type, they were much bigger than the men—another fact to the disadvantage of their undersized partners—and often, as with Ziliah, they were superb. (The matrimonial question was already looming ominously prominent for King Bjornsen, and his counsellors, I knew, were solicitous for his royal appreciation of their daughters—"one, or several or all," said Hopkins.)

And *there* was the great and glorious land of the Gold Makers. As we approached, its diversity and contrasts became excitingly apparent. And, as in myself dawned the scheme of making it the point of my departure, or ESCAPE, to that great outer world from which like thrown pebbles Chance—not in this case a blind goddess—had dropped us into this sealed and secluded lesser world, it assumed a veritable splendor. Far off the shimmering agitation of the broad stream that poured its accumulated flood down a long grade from the Canon of Promise, in a vast crosscut through the Pine Tree Gredin, sparkled in our view. Hills, low and sparsely wooded, rose from the floor of the Valley of Rasselas—we had already reached the latter's northwestern limit—between them were flat and grassed interspaces, and in the foreground a savannah-like expanse, quite treeless, and then far to the right the clustering villages of the Gold Makers. Obviously the river dominated the scene, with that far distant background of indefinite elevations outlining the northern concentric bulwarks of

Krocker Land, beyond which a good glass might detect the shroud of the Perpetual Nimbus, and yet farther, infinitely removed, but seen in presence if not in form, the snowy or ruddy pinnacles of Krocker Land Rim. The river before it reached the pastoral foreground had recovered its calm, and only in its full tide did the gliding patches of foam, and here and there a larger, more disquieted wave, indicate the turmoil and torture of its descent. The road drew near to its banks. Within our view it turned westward, and we could see that it again passed outward between the walls of a rugged and imposing defile. Could I trust myself to its impetuous current, and find over its boiling waters an avenue of escape? So I mused, as we jolted along and as, to me, the scenery brought back long forgotten pictures of the Vale of Llangollen in Wales.

Scarcely were we in sight of the villages than some of their occupants hurried to meet us. When they came closer, to our wonder, we found them, as Oogalah had described, of a different racial type from the rest of the Radiumopolites and very unmistakably Samoyedes, men from the vast Siberian uplands, physically distinguishable by the broad faces and pyramidal skulls of the Turanian family. These nomads of the treeless fringes of Siberia, so far as indications showed or inquiry elicited, had been in a small company, wrecked on the Arctic coast of Krocker Land in some dateless past. They had made their way into the Valley of Rasselas, had established themselves without molestation in this restricted corner, and had then—how, remained an unanswered or insoluble question—come under subjection of the Radiumopolites. When the peculiar industry which now engaged them had developed was as indefinite in its relations to what went before or followed after it as the advent of the

supernatural (?) stranger who had taught Radiumopolis the process of gold manufacture itself.

It seemed however that at an early time these Samoyedes had been appropriated as workers in this singular art, because of their discovered immunity from the deleterious effects or influences of the hypostatic element.

I saw men and women fishing in the broad river, and to my amazement found their boats were literally rafts—wooden logs bound together by ropes or thongs of leather and fibre. Hardly had I perceived this before the thought and hope flashed through my mind that on some such vehicle of transit I could trust myself to the stream, and that it was most likely that these hardy highlanders could give me the information I now needed as to the channel, direction, debouchment, and navigableness of the noble water in its course to the coast.

One of the strange idiosyncracies of the Radiumopolites, in spite of their attested skill in workmanship, their intelligence and emotional liveliness, was their obtuseness in geographic matters, or better, *numbness*. I don't think they ever questioned the fact of their absolute finality both in place and in existence. Outside of the distant Krocker Land Rim was nothing but that blockade of ice, of which they had heard—the gold belt found by Goritz was a token of an aeronautic (?) reconnaissance—and outside of that, if speculation in their minds suggested the query, was just nothing again. As the Professor said, "The centripetal tendency of many primitive cultures was well understood, but in this case it was pivotal on a new topographic conformation that forbade migration." I don't suppose it ever occurred to a Radiumopolite to even ask what might become of that river cutting across this corner of his Eden-like valley. They had become *static*, and what they knew and what they enjoyed

never changed. In house building, in weaving, in a rude artistry of design, in agriculture, in brick and tile and pot making, in their religion, in their games, they had attained a development that gave them happiness. And that ended it. It was Inca-like, or Mayan, Toltecan, Aztecan, or any of the American cultures which inhabit one spot, flourishing within it and never exceeding it, like the phenomena of centralization in plants and animals. And yet what questions this same culture suggested to a less individualized student, that diminutive Semitic race, the tree and serpent survival, and this unique oligarchy of little magnates!

Arrived within the precincts of the Samoyedian village, there was a bustling reception from dogs and children. These were the first dogs we had seen. Then a slow emergence of women and older men from the low briquette abodes followed. Almost without noticing their salutations, Javan, Put, Hul, Peleg, Hadad, leading the way, took us through the scanty settlement to a series of barracks, also made of burned clay briquettes, and entered the first one. On long rude tables were heaped, in this armory, piles of *galena* (lead sulphide), and the glistening mineral was in nodules, free and clear, or enclosed in a pulverulent limestone. It was the duty here of the workmen to extract the mineral from its matrix, pound it into dust, and separate it in small wicker baskets. It was then carried away in these receptacles, by men, to other buildings. In another house or shed *Sphalerite* (zinc sulphide) was similarly treated. From these preparatory stages we passed to the radium storehouse. This was practically a cave dug in the side of the hill, where the material, gathered by Oogalah was kept, and which we were not permitted to enter. The radium masses were

thrown into this place through an opening above, a sort of chimney, and removed below by an opening which permitted their extrication by stone hoes. As they were drawn out they were taken in baskets to the Mixing House. The critical work was effected here.

In every respect it was like the other workshops, but in it the workmen did not remain more than two hours at a time, the "shifts," as we would say, being then changed. At one end of this building the radium nodules were cleared of their dull coatings of oxide. Instantly the metallic nuclei, which was malleable to a slight degree, but which soon developed brittleness, were pushed towards other workmen, who hammered them with stone mallets or hammers until they were broken or splintered into grains or small angular pieces. This triturated metal was pushed forward again with slate knives to the last group of workers to whom the basket of pulverized lead and zinc mineral had been brought.

These operators divided the broken radium into lots and poured over each lot the contents of a single basket. The heap thus formed of the commingled radium and sulphide was then drawn to the edge of the stone and brick table and carefully scraped into a leathern or woven apron or bag and tied up. From this house these bundles were carried away to a distant upland which furnished a favorable soil for their burial; they were deposited in holes, five to ten feet deep, the variation in depth having some reference to the size of the bundles. These burials were then not disturbed for a length of time which corresponded to about a year of our time. At the expiration of that period they were exhumed and examined. Fortunately we were enabled to see this stage of the process also. The bundle being taken out of its

sepulture is opened on a table and its contents spread out in a thin layer. From the granular commixture the gold particles are carefully picked out, and are then collected for welding by pressure into larger pieces.

Certainly nothing could have been more amazing than the exhibition thus offered of the transmuting power of this wizard element. The transmutation is never complete, that is, the original mass of galena or sphalerite is never wholly converted into gold. The residues are reinterred with the almost unaltered radium, and after six months are again examined. The second crop of gold grains invariably is less, and after a third trial the mixture is carefully freed from the radium and the unaffected sulphide thrown out. The radium thus used is kept apart from the fresher supplies of radium whose potency is always stronger. But the partially exhausted reagent is saved, and used over and over again with fresh ores. For, just as the radium suffers a diminution of efficacy, so does the sulphide lose its susceptibility to its influence. This necessarily involves considerable sorting, parceling, labeling and adjustment. Superintendents watch the operations of each workhouse, and the new and old supplies of the radium and of the ores are successfully recorded and mutually apportioned, as experience dictates. The lead sulphide yields the larger percentage of transmuted gold.

In all instances the crop of gold is small, and its accumulation slow, so that the rich displays at Radiumopolis must have represented the result of many years of this peculiar labor. Javan told me that the yield of gold was steadily diminishing because of the difficulty of obtaining radium, and the almost exhausted condition of the lead and zinc sulphide mines. Then he told me of a possible new replenishment of the latter from deposits far

beyond the pine tree forest to the east. The Professor, Hopkins, and myself exchanged an astute smile of understanding as did also Goritz, though less intelligibly. We recalled the flying trip of the doctors, and the radium-lighted cave in the Deer Fels. The mines of sulphide in the limestone hills of the Gold Makers' country are of the types familiar to the miners of the same mineral in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa.

With what wonder stricken faces the Professor, Hopkins, Goritz and I gazed upon the flattened piles of sulphide ore and radium, after the long-buried mixture was taken out of the ground in whose seclusion the miraculous effect had indisputably been produced. The lead-gray glint of the ore made more conspicuous the scattered dust of gold amongst it, with particles cohering to half converted lumps of galena. And our wonder transcended words when we were led into an adjoining room where the gold detritus was hammered into sizeable bits, and these again compacted into sticks or nodules, while on the shelves surrounding this apartment, the collected masses lay in bewildering confusion. Aladdin's Lamp seemed almost less insupportably incredible.

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It was on the occasion of the enforced second—but much desired—visit, when we besought the services of the Samoyedes to recover the body of our lost friend, that I again studied, more closely, the chances of the river liberating me from the increasingly unendurable imprisonment. A few of the hardened Samoyedes were brought back with us, after this errand of mercy, to Radiumopolis, and with Oogalah they recovered the body of Goritz. I think the Council would have been pleased to have instituted a special Crocodilo-Python festival,

and delivered the poor fellow's body to the horrible denizens of the neighboring swamps, but King Bjornsen forbade that sternly, and it caused some unpleasantness. It was another indication to me of the inevitable "blow-up," as Hopkins called it, of our amicable relations with these Radiumopolites, and the increasing urgency of my effecting my escape, to bring to my friends the means of their possible extrication. Under the pretence of returning Goritz to the sky, from which (with us) he had come, we secretly buried him in the valley, and there he lies today.

It was something of a *contre-temp* to have Goritz die at all. It gave a rather second-hand and made-up look to our claims to have come from the heavens, and to the inquiring minds of our enemies supplied undesirable data for starting grave doubts as to our authenticity—still another danger lurking in our path, or, as Hopkins gloomily put it, "another nail in our coffins."

Our friend was King indeed, but the enthusiasm that had carried him to that eminence lacked permanence. It could not be rooted in racial consanguinity, it was probably constantly decried by the little doctors, and the Professor, to quote the epigrammatic Hopkins, was a "poor mixer." That last word unveiled a multitude of perils.

CHAPTER XV

My Escape

You must have observed, sir, that in my narrative I have from time to time exhibited our variant and varying frames or states of mind toward the strange conditions we were approaching, and the still stranger ones we actually entered. You have been told that some of us dreaded to go on—myself for instance—that later, diverted or enthralled by the strangeness of it all, we wanted to go faster, that from shrinkingly divining some disaster we were lulled into the anticipation of great pleasure, and that when our actual danger was reached and surmounted it might seem we should almost have resigned ourselves to stay; resigned ourselves to that serenity of mind depicted by Doctor Johnson, from whose work the Professor derived the name he had given to the central vale of Krocker Land, where, "such was the appearance of security and delight which their retirement afforded, that they to whom it was new always desired that it might be perpetual."

But it surely does not require much penetration of feeling, to say the least, or sympathy of mind, to see that our position would very soon become unendurable, from the same general repugnance in all of us and from particular motives in each. To begin with, we soon felt stifled in this recondite and obsolete and trivial civilization; the very cir-

cular enclosure which shut it in became a prison, and after all, if we were of the same zoological *stirps*, as these people, we had differentiated too much for pleasurable association. At no time have I felt so keenly that the breath of the modern man's life must be the breath of the world where it moves the fastest and its breath is quickest.

Then there was the wonderful discovery itself to be published, the Professor's notes, crowded upon the pages of a notebook he had most carefully preserved, to be given to science. Goritz before his death yearned for the gratification of indulgences to be purchased by his new wealth, and, as he thought, his new knowledge. I revolted at the surroundings, the snakes and the periodic sacrifices, and feared an inevitable distrust and collision. Hopkins loved Ziliah, but he had found in this *rara-avis* a positive promise of supreme adaptation to the best life he could give her in the world. At any rate he wished to try it.

Our discontent increased, our impatience chafed our nerves, and in hastily stolen conferences we determined upon a supreme effort to escape. We were tormented by the espionage and ruffled manners of the Council of Thirty, who interminably buzzed about us, and had probably shrewdly detected our hidden restlessness. And the utter dullness of the life! Never before have I so unspeakably realized that even if you cannot live in the current of life, you must live near it, hear its murmurs, watch its waves, and rejoice in knowing those who swim either with or against it. We had all been dreadfully disappointed in the Radiumopolites.

Again and again we planned to break away under some pretence of revisiting our celestial home, hurrying off and disappearing completely, though now we had made up our minds to return with big

reinforcements of assistance and to turn over this new continent to the examination and gaze of science. It seems a cruel decision. But why not? Krocker Land could not in any case remain much longer concealed, and we were entitled to the fruits of our adventure, while we were reasonably confident we could make its investiture by our civilization safe, humane, undisturbing. I think differently now, but that was our conclusion.

"This Ascension business," as Hopkins called it, was just humanly possible by the use of balloons, and it was apposite that at the Professor's enthronement, the aeronautics of the Radiumopolites were displayed at last. It very oddly turned out that only the smaller race played with the balloons. The word is deliberately correct. These balloons were a kind of household furniture or means of diversion, as a bicycle is with us. They furnished inexhaustible amusement to the little people, but even there their use was limited to the very daring or the *very light*. Almost every family possessed one. And yet more curiously it was in the balloon line that experiment and invention were actually stirring these ludicrous people to improve and add to what they knew. This activity sprang from the unsatisfactory discrimination their present aeronautical knowledge made between light and heavy weights.

This ballooning in Krocker Land is in every way anomalous and extraordinary, and like their knowledge of transmutation partakes of the miraculous, certainly the previously unsuspected. Science here is again in the presence of a New Departure. The balloons are filled with a gas having a far greater buoyancy than pure hydrogen and it is derived from gas wells, themselves of very moderate depth, but evidently supplied from far more deeply seated sources. It is incontestable.

A balloon not three feet in diameter will levitate thirty pounds!

Except for the astonishing transmutation this physical fact invades the realm of the unbelievable more deeply than anything else.

No evidence of this wide-spread predilection appeared before the Professor's enthronement. The suppression of the sport had something to do with the ceremonial rites of visiting the tree shrines, I believe, the winter solstitial feeding with human bodies of the saurians, and awaiting the spring planting of grain. The opening of the season, so to speak, is inaugurated by the ascent of the entire Areopagus, and after that the amusement becomes general.

All of the Aeropagites are not equally expert, and many, after a sufficient aerial excursion to meet the ceremonial requirements, which are *de rigueur*, subside and retire. But the art of sailing the air is traditionally a matter of pride, and the leaders do very well. It was an adventuresome trip for them to have attempted reaching the outskirts of Krocker Land when we met them softly settling down on the Deer Fels, and it later proved almost indubitable that they were the customary political bosses, Javan, Put, Hul, Peleg and Hadad, though a closer inspection of these worthies corrected some of our first impressions, expressed before in that chapter of this narrative.

The experimental efforts at improvement arose from the discontent and envy of the heavier individuals over the glad pastimes and disportments of the lighter ones. You see the method involved the use of at least three balloons, one from each shoulder and one from the waist, and as three feet diameter was the maximum size, safely manipulated, those weighing over ninety pounds—and there were a great number of these, almost all

adults of the taller race, and many women of the smaller—were simply excluded from this diversion. *Hinc illae lacrymae*, and hence also the energy of invention to overcome this disparity.

When the sports began, nothing could have been more interesting and spectacular. Groups would rise together, separate, and reunite. This air-swimming was effected by fans attached to the wrists. But the Aeropagites revealed a superior guidance, at least we imagined so, for when their floating shapes had thrown shadows on the illumined summits of the Deer Fels, they had been provided with those inexplicable tubes, and up to the moment of my escape these miracles had not been repeated. And the NEW tubes—where were they?

The proper state of the weather was indispensable and only in complete calms would the amusing exhibition take place. As in all exercises, bolder spirits attempted their excursions under perilous conditions in high or moderate winds, but these had often resulted in loss of life, the unhappy aeronaut falling or actually being driven headlong like a fly or moth beyond the valley into the solitudes and dangers of its encircling zones.

The harness—for it is nothing less—which the aeronaut assumes holds him easily and steadily to the three bubbles above him, and, as he generally can regulate his flight with his hands, his indeterminate control is over his descent. Few accidents occur. The balloons are symmetrized in position over him, the one at the waist being nearest his body and the two outside bags higher but on a level with each other. His control is entirely over the central balloon which he may quickly deplete by opening a valve. Variations of adjustment and of apparatus, as might be imagined, are numerous, and individual tastes or designs introduce great

diversity. There may be four or five or even six balloons employed, but in this case they are made much smaller. The balloons may be of different sizes. Along the direction of increasing the number of maximum sized balloons lay the hopes of the bigger people, but there had been some bad mishaps, and the balance or adjustment proved difficult. The levitation became unmanageable, and the descents were often appallingly rapid and shockingly tragic.

When these air revels began—as they did at the Professor's coronation—minus the crown—we momentarily seized upon the project of adapting this locomotion for our flight. It required a very brief inspection to utterly expose the hopelessness of this scheme and still more strongly occurred to us the prohibition from attempting to leave together. Such a wholesale evacuation, unless accomplished as one might say *de coup de tonnerre*, would never be practicable, and as Hopkins ruefully reminded us, "Ziliah may be an angel, but I'd rather sour on her prospects of being a balloonist."

Literally I was the only free man, now that Goritz was gone, and literally upon me devolved the task of getting back, rousing the world, and effecting my friends' release. How should, how could I do it?

Always distressed by this inseparable anxiety, the trip to the Gold Makers suddenly appealed to my searching mind with a strong likelihood that the great river we had skirted might carry me safely, and, too, with a swiftness beyond our hopes to liberty, though when more seriously considered, it might prove, I saw, to be only the *Liberty of Death.*

Immediately, therefore, after our return I found a convenient occasion to discuss this project with the Professor and Hopkins. It struck them both favorably, though they rather shrank from recom-

mending it, as it was equally clear that if the river could be, as it were, employed at all, it would probably prove to be an obstreperous and mischievous servant. However, that *way lay my path.*

Under the pretence—hardly ever now were we free from some dogging spy at our elbows—of wishing to report more faithfully the operations of the Gold Makers in that book which he was writing on Radiumopolis, and which somehow had now captivated the fancy of the Council, the Professor (King Bjornsen), Hopkins and myself revisited the distant village. Although we were not permitted to go unattended, it was easy enough for me to engage the Samoyedes in conversation, and ask them about their knowledge of the great river. They spoke quite freely about it, and proved not only willing to tell me all they knew, but discouraged my plan to navigate the river to its mouth, by a not altogether lucid account of the attempt of one of their fishermen to venture on the river beyond the rocky gateway frowning on them to the west, and of his receiving some sort of violent treatment at its hands, he being thrown ashore and returning along the banks of the stream, reaching home almost more dead than alive. So ran their broken and obscure story.

Where was this man? "Dead." Were any of his family, descendants, acquaintances, intimates, living? "Oh—yes—he knew everybody." After some painstaking examination, accompanied by an immense amount of irrelevant recollections of what he did after his return, how he died, and how he was buried, his size, his strength, his obstinacy, and a recital of the disposition of his slender estate, I uncovered a trail of associations leading to an old blind man who was yet alive, and who, it was supposed, knew a little more exactly than anyone else what this daring disciple of Izaak Walton had seen or experienced.

This ancient was located, but it proved a mountainous task to extract much intelligible information from him, partly because he was dreadfully deaf, hopelessly stupid, and so incoherent that the interpreters chosen to interview him appeared to be at their wits' ends to make him out, and more particularly because he was himself suspicious of his examiners.

I at last came away with the impression that the man had floated off peacefully on the swelling breast of the flood as it emerged from the broad lake-like embayment in the Gold Makers' land, and had been carried along for a great distance at a rapid rate but not with much or any danger, until the descent brought him to a change in the bed or banks of the river (what this change was could not be determined), and that he had even survived this, but that later he jumped overboard from his raft (for raft it was), and reached the shore and, satisfied with his adventure, had made his way back by almost incredible exertions.

Singular as it may seem to you, sir, my deductions from this incomplete story, bristling as it might seem with unimagined, untold dangers, were, that the river maintained a full flow, was seldom interrupted by obstructions, had some serious breaks in its grade, which, however, did not involve actual falls, and, if violent at any point, was not unnegotiable, as you say. The fisherman evidently passed the worst place alive, but did not survive the shock. He lost his nerve and got ashore—and besides, in his case, there were most valid reasons for objecting to a lengthier transit.

This favorable interpretation, so far as it helped me to make up my mind, was really itself helped by a kind of desperation. It was impossible for me to remain in this solitude any longer. An almost fierce monomania of repulsion was growing within

me, and, of some natural hardihood myself, this excitant for action bestowed on me an almost unnatural indifference to danger.

Later I told my friends I had made up my mind. Whatever perils lay in my way I would cope with them as I could—but GO I would, and as an avenue of escape that seemed to promise the quickest release I preferred the river. There were many solemn and affecting conferences—continued as we had opportunity—and the preparations were, so far as the resources allowed, carefully made. They were indeed so wisely made that I reached the Siberian Sea safe and sound. The intervention of Luck or Providence in assisting him, is consciously or unconsciously expected by every Arctic explorer, probably by any explorer; and with the contribution of his best judgment, unsparing effort, and personal fortitude, he is inclined to put the blame of his failure—if he fails—on those two omnipotent factors. If he succeeds, a brave man is probably not less inclined to give them the credit.

We selected the best rifle of our little collection, stored all of our ammunition, depending on the ingenuity of Hopkins and the King to reconcile the Radiumopolites to this sequestration of their beloved thunder, the Professor entrusted to me some pencil scribbled papers, and then we turned our attention to my personal equipment. I believed that in a week's time at the most I would be enabled to reach the coast. We all felt that, assuming a parallel conformation of the various zonal strips we had traversed entering Rasselas, their proximity on the west argued for a probable narrowing of their width. To have attempted the eastward route over the path we had taken had no attractions for me, and from the first we felt my absence would then be more quickly discovered, and myself *willy-nilly* overhauled.

But later we turned our first plans upside-down. Hopkins said my departure should be a public event, that we would never be able to accomplish anything satisfactorily in this hidden, secret fashion.

"Take the bull by the horns; fly a high kite and put it up to 'em this way. Tell 'em the shade, spirit, spook, anything that's handy of Antoine Goritz, has appeared to you, and told you to take to the water; that big things will be brought back that way; that the Serpent God wishes it— Oh, anything. Hand it out strong and lively and scary. I guess that'll rehabilitate Goritz too, give him the *saecula saeculorum* sort of effect, and it won't do us any harm either to keep up our show of being on intimate terms with ghosts and such."

"Will they believe it?" I asked.

"Sure. Why not? What else have they got to do? They're made that way. All of these rubbishy people who came into existence before gas and electricity, the telephone, trolley car, pasteurized milk and incubators, will believe anything you tell 'em about goblins and witches and scarecrows and second sight and dreams and invisible voices. Try it, Alfred. It's a cinch."

Well, we did try it and it was, to put it that way, an unalleviated success. Still there was a fly in the ointment, in a way. Ziliah told Hopkins the little doctors were overjoyed—they wanted *me* out of the road. I asked the Professor and Hopkins what they thought about that and they both agreed they could take care of themselves. This upshot of the matter was indeed a rather disturbing surprise, but—my departure was a triumph!

The resources of Radiumopolis were at my disposal—food, clothing, and although direction or information could not be furnished, the physical requisitions for combating hunger and cold were

generously provided. This alacrity on the part of the little rulers was unmistakably connected with their expectation that the adventure would be the last of *me*. They were obedient to the injunctions of King Bjornsen, but their subserviency was hypocritical in its protestations of devotion.

Unluckily there was the most helpless ignorance of boat making to contend with, and the additional provocation to despair that there were no tools to make them with. This historic fisherman had tried to do the trick with a raft. I would take a raft too. What else? The Samoyedes built them well and strongly, and under my uncontrolled supervision a narrow raft made of two tiers of logs, crossed in position and bound together with the strongest ropes, was prepared. On this a woven hamper was firmly fastened, and in that were placed my provisions (tortillas, and dried meat)and extra clothing, and rugs, and a sleeping bag of sheepskin. A pack strapped to my back carried Goritz's gold souvenirs, some radium masses, a compass, chronometer, matches and a selection of fishing hooks and lines. A gun was almost riveted to my side, so immobile did it seem. But the *tour de force* of foresight was involved in the insertion of two short posts (five feet high) at the stern, though distant from the raft's edge by about three feet, and distant from each other by three feet. To each of these posts, at the level of my shoulders, was reamed a hole for two looped leathern thongs, so adjusted that standing between the posts I could insert my arms in the loops, clasp my hands across my breast, and secure a chancery that nothing short of dislocation of the raft itself could break, or the avulsion of my own arms from their sockets, while in an instant I could free myself.

The Samoyedes rigged up a rude steering tiller which of course was indispensable. It consisted of

a girdle suspended from a cross piece, binding the two abovementioned posts, through which a stick paddle was swung. It was decidedly awkward, as it displaced me from my position of safety between the posts, and therefore at critical moments might prove quite worthless, if not a positive danger. Here I must count on my own agility and strength. Besides this tiller half a dozen poles and as many oars were tied to the posts projecting above them like short masts. These might prove very serviceable. But there was also a last Atlantean touch. Two of the three foot balloons were firmly tied to the crosspiece of the upright posts. It was the Professor's suggestion, and I am positive that at a critical twist it saved matters.

That was about all, except that some further records were given me by Bjornsen and they were consigned to the great woven hamper. Well, some learned societies will be saved head splitting disputes, and no-less head dizzying theories, the former perhaps not altogether harmless. *That hamper never came through.*

By the beginning of July I was ready for the plunge. The day was auspicious, clear but torrid, with the stationary sun wrapped in luminous clouds, and its overwhelming rival coursing a higher altitude in unchecked splendor. The great river assumed an enticing placidity; its tranquil current had even lost the chained bubbles floating from the shattering cascades that freed it from the Canon of Promise. And Radiumopolis had bodily transferred itself to the scene; the banks, the hills, the roofs of a few abandoned sheds were closely crowded, by a wonderfully variegated multitude, intensely interested, subdued into a faintly murmurous throng by the excitement of admiration. I was something more than a hero that day. Obeying the summons of the spirit of my former com-

panion, I was to rejoin him along that trackless pathway of the great river, whose banks touched heaven, in whose inaccessible depths dwelt all the demons of death and terror.

There was a reservation of space, at the point where my raft swung uneasily, for the King, the Council, Hopkins and Ziliah, and the magistrates of the city, and only a Hogarth could have done justice to that commixture of physiognomies, the odd and contrasted figures, interspersed with the taller men and women, all wearing their regalia, and the massed battalions beyond them in holiday array. Some daring aeronauts circled in the air above me. Flowers did not figure in the festivals nor in the predilections of the Radiumopolites, though blue and yellow blossoms lit their landscapes with a smile of floral prettiness that was very bewitching, and their own blue and yellow tunics, or coats, indicated some sympathy with these colors. On this occasion I was presented with some flat pincushion-like mats made up of these flowers by some blushing girls, and from the laughter—gentle and decorous—that this evoked, I believed they evinced a warmer sentiment than regret. Of course my mission, as publicly declared, precluded my probable return, or, at least, it meant my long absence. By the Council doubtless, certainly by a few undisguised enemies in it, it was hoped that it meant my wholesale and irremediable destruction.

As I shook hands with all I came at last to the Professor (King Bjornsen) and Hopkins. Our hands closed tightly and we dared not look each other in the face. I heard Hopkins whisper, "Heaven help you," and if prayer reaches the throne of Grace when it is consecrated by the heart's holiest hope, that prayer, I know, ascended to its place. As the Professor embraced me, he loosened the belt of lead I had worn and replaced it

with a heavy gold girdle whose big buckle bore the carven Serpent. That, Mr. Link, I have never shown to anyone. Diaz, Huerta nor Angelica have ever seen it. It will amaze you. The Professor removed it from his own waist. There was a half hushed remonstrance. But the King's gift was interpreted favorably, and as I received it a shout went up, and even the Council, for prudent reasons possibly, indulged in a titter of endorsement. My raft was pushed by willing hands into the stream. Its prow or front yielded to the gentle urgency of the current, and turned. I stood upon the hamper, and waved my hat—not the beehive contraption but a sheepskin fez—and again the Radium-opolites, now strangely stirred by this solemn gliding departure of a single man into the unknown, broke spontaneously into one of their sing-song, not quite unmusical, and not exactly musical, chants, which rising in pitch until it swelled to me over the water, almost seemed, I drearily thought, like a dirge. Its crooning wail still filled my ears when all details of the multitude were lost, and the shadow of the great gateway of rock, into which the river was relentlessly carrying me fell across the glassy wave that had now become my path to liberty.

There was now nothing to be thought of but self-preservation amid unknown and unsuspected dangers. I seized some bread—*tortilla*—a hunk of the dried, not unpalatable meat, and drank some wine. This interjected meal raised my spirits. A momentary *sang-froid* replaced my nervousness, and indeed, so great was my exultation at the thought of regaining the vanished world, of liberation from an unendurable stagnation and the bald, horrible misery of a silly paganism, that I became almost cheerful. That mood did not last long. Already I had passed the portal of the deep canon. The

red sandstone walls rose in sheer precipices above me, and were rising visibly higher beyond. A few shrunken pine trees clung here and there to shelves of rock, while through some upward openings, and leading into transverse valleys, I caught glimpses of the dark green motionless tops of the serried trees that here marked the amphitheater of the Pine Tree Gredin.

The grimness of the swiftly developing descent almost appalled me now. I was on the back of a resistless flood not yet maddened into a fury of impetuous violence by opposition, nor quickened into the onset of a galloping torrent by sharper changes in its gradient, but doubtless bringing me and my smoothly drifting raft into just such wild vicissitudes. Could either one or the other survive them? The clumsy boat beneath my feet was a willing servant. It responded to the strokes of the tiller, and my dismal forebodings were momentarily forgotten in the amusement it gave me to swing the raft from side to side of the still broad waterway. As the light became dimmer, and a half crepuscular dusk crept into the deepening fissure over whose topmost edges the sky hung like an illuminated ribbon, I felt the grip of a solemn dread, the precurrent rigor of that deadly *rigor animae* which palsies the heart.

Still on and on, in a course that scarcely deviated from a straight line, and thus safely conducted *us* (to me my little barge shared, as a sentient thing, our common danger, and it alleviated my solitude to fancifully, as children do, personify it, talk to it, praise it) toward that distant goal, the ice-packed shore of Krocker Land. The bed of the stream lay in a rectilinear joint and the weathering on either side had not greatly widened the aperture above. The picture changed only in detail. The frowning sides, walls scarcely relieved by any vegetation or,

which, if there, was too far above me for my eyes to detect, offered no distinction in color. Nature had not here spread her palette of blending hues, those that over the silent expanses of the Grand Canon of the Colorado transfer the colors of sunset to the immutable stone. It was the utter sternness, the harsh, immense uniformity of the still increasing precipices that crushed the soul. I seemed like an atom in the void, a plaything of nature; for a moment, and for a moment only, seen in this outraged solitude, to become then a part too of the lifeless panorama.

The cliffs rose now a thousand feet or more, and sensibly receded, the dislodged blocks from their summits building an awful fringe of titanic boulders, angular monoliths, at the water's edge. Beyond me stretched the unvarying avenue, the shooting river seeming far away, motionless and fixed like a congealed mass, though every particle of it was flying onward with fresh acceleration. There could be no doubt of that. Points observed on the shores were more and more rapidly passed. This hastening pace became to me a portent of disaster. The angry river, placable at first, luring its audacious victim onward, now in sullen mastery, with a rising temper, as if impatient over its own leniency threatened to hurl the petty intruder, the graceless little egotist, into eternity. It would have done with him, washing his lifeless corse on its sullied waters to the depthless ocean, a memento and a warning, if so paltry an object could be either. Thus I seemed to divine the storm of its gathering wrath.

So far the great volume of water had been accommodated in the channel, and the surface of the river was almost smooth. But with the increasing speed the channel narrowed, and the water became turbulent. Waves rushed on and out from the shores

and rolling backs of water chased each other in the center of the stream. Fortunately, though the waves washed the raft from end to end and sometimes drove me to the protection of the upright posts, the river maintained its straight course, and we still rode gallantly onward. There were sudden dips, down which we slid with alarming velocity, that made me shudder, but nowhere a rock, a breaker, no treacherous bend, no falls, not even yet the dashing turmoil of a rapid. What invention of malice was this?

Suddenly my eye noticed a prominent bulge in the river, perhaps three or four miles ahead. It lay about midstream. Here was some formidable interruption? Was there a sluice-way on either side of it? If so I could avoid it; the balloons helped my buoyancy. The raft trembled. Ah, already it felt some premonitions of the tussle. Yes, a decided—no, not a bulge after all; it was a drop, the river fell over a ledge, but apparently a low one, so low that the deep volume filled it up, making the transition from above to below it inconsiderable, and below—I could just see—was retardation, and expansion; the river moved there over a flat! Curious, such relenting!

"Have no fear, Old Boy," I shouted, stamping the logs beneath me to awaken their attention, "stick together, take a brace and over we go, safe and sound."

The spot seemed to rush towards us. For an instant I hesitated. Should I scoot to the sides and avoid the plunge? Was it a trap? The tortuous flow sideways might smash us against the rocks, and then—Ah! then, *requiescat in pace.* Down the center, sink or swim, there was no help for it—once over, thrice saved—a wetting perhaps, perhaps a mouthful of water.

The boiling water lashed us, and something like

a moan came to me from the shores, almost as if the baffled river gnashed in its impotent disgust. I steered for the rounded mound in front; a straining creak from the grinding logs, a sharper bolt ahead—I clung to the posts, and the neglected tiller dragged behind—another sprint and I saw the shelving face of the water below the drop tossing furiously. Over, with an upward jolt; that was the greatest danger of all. But the sturdy frame held together, and then in a tussle of bristling waves, noisy, each one striking over its neighbor's shoulder at us, and I hard at the tiller, we raced down the slope, inundated, wrenched, even pitched a little, but quite safe, quite sound. I could not restrain my impulse to shout, though a moment later, as the mocking echoes smote my ear, fear stilled my voice, and stunned conscience whispered: "Pride goeth before a fall."

The raft swam later into the center of a lake-like space, in a welter of bubbles and foam from the cascading water. The cliffs here declined, and to the north a pass led upwards at whose termination on the waterside two deer were actually drinking. Had they heard me shout? Their undisturbed assurance denied it. But now they caught sight of me and were retreating with backward glances as they halted on the grass-lined trail. I was in the Deer Fels.

I steered my craft, which had now gained the prestige of an actual companionship, toward the shore, drew out one of the poles, and poled it carefully inshore at a sandy brink not far from the footprints of the deer. I was very quiet now, so as not to frighten away the animals who watched me from a high point. Their presence delighted me, and reinforced my courage. Had they been at my side I could not have raised a hand against them, so fraternal and human did they seem. But oh, for a

voice to answer my own! I talked to myself, but not loudly. I dreaded to wake those jeering echoes.

The sunlight streamed through the pass, and I went up a short distance very softly, for the deer were vigilant, but still remained where I could see them. I lay down on a grassy knoll and dried myself. Then I returned to the raft and picked out some food. Much of it was wet and the contents of the hamper needed overhauling and drying. I made a fire, finding some chance sticks and wood, and in the one kettle left to us, and which Hopkins had given me, I actually made a stew which tasted divine.

Then I climbed to the top of the ridge and looked about. I could see the pine trees' shadow eastward, the rolling hill land of the Fels about me, and beyond, westward, the big plateau of the aquatic trough, and then I thought I caught the pale, fluctuating, gushing pillars of the Nimbus and, as had often happened from other points, glimpses of the pinnacled and snow-capped Rim. I momentarily doubted my own resolve. Should I abandon the raft and travel over the land to the coast? But that awful crevice of the Nimbus rose threateningly to mind. I feared it. Before it the untried terrors of that descent to the coast by the imprisoned plunging stream actually looked inviting. Perhaps too the worst was over. And then the quickness of it. Twenty-four hours more and I would be released. Released? How? Thrown on a pitiless coast, beleaguered by the endless ice! What madness was this. Safety, a kind of animal happiness, at least, had been mine in the sleeping vale of Rasselas. But now—? I shuddered, and the swarming rogues of despair and foreboding rose in clouds like gnats from a shaken bush. It was an instant when a man's heart seems to weaken into water.

I had slowly retraced my way, and there I stood at the edge of the waterway, one foot lifted to step upon the raft, to all appearances a man calmly bent upon the fulfillment of his purpose. And yet all the while I was beset with conflicting and warring thoughts. It was so as I took the sleeping bag and a rug or so and tied them to the posts, arguing almost unwittingly that, were the hamper swept away, I would thus save *them*. And then blindly I crammed my pack—ready at any crisis for my back—with food. It was even so as I took my place on the raft, as I pushed it off from the shore, as I maneuvered it into the streamway, even as I took the tiller and guided my boat on to the fastest current. The automatic force of some ulterior prevention just kept me in the chosen line of work, unconsciously and yet irreversibly. Strange!

Again the darkness of the canon walls fell around me, and then only the subdued mind rose and reformed, as it were, visibly, my unalterable determination. And indeed now there no longer was room for incertitude. The rush forward keyed every sense into a vivid expectancy. The bed of the river had become more gorge-like, the uneven and projecting cornice edges of the rock on either side sent back the bounding water, and the surface around me was filled with leaping waves. The course though, most luckily, remained almost undeviatingly straight. To have engineered a curve or any sharp deflection would have been almost impossible at the rapid swing the raft was taking in the descent, which, however, hardly varied from my previous experience. It was difficult enough to keep "my keel" steady, with the constant tendency of the logs to throw themselves across the stream. It was buffeted by the "rollers" sent inward from the shores, and the rapid pull of the midstream was itself interrupted or diverted by

the development of short waves, that chased down the center of the channel, and that indicated obstructions or inequalities in the bed over which the water was impetuously pouring.

It was only by the stiffest exertions that I was enabled to keep the raft headed true, and, as it was, over the rougher passages it was swept with water. I was drenched, the spray and waves splashed and rose upon me. I now realized the indispensable assistance given by the posts and the unbreakable loops, one of which at least was constantly in use. The management of the tiller, in this half imprisonment, was awkward, but in spite of strains, shiftings, violent jolts and lunges the raft shot well along the center, and did not seriously deviate from an axial position.

It was evident, too, as we swept onward, though my attention was too eagerly fixed on the recurrent predicaments in the water to be able to notice it carefully, that the canon above had enormously widened. I mean that the upper walls had receded through progressive weathering; the tunnel-like grimness had somewhat softened, and more light fell on me. Fortunately there were changes in the gradient of the rocky floor, and while some were on the wrong side of the account, others introduced agreeable relief. These latter were more level stretches where the turbulence disappeared, and the raft floated evenly, and was easily kept obedient to her helm.

I had been running safely enough, though the margin of safety, it must be said, was often a very narrow one, for some ten or twelve hours, and the loss of sleep, constant anxiety, the wetting and the indifferent sustenance had been slowly telling on me when my weary eyes detected a new, perhaps a crowning danger.

Before me the walls of the canon seemed to close

—they always did so in the manner of a perspective coalescence—but this was now different. There was a break in the continuity of the channel. The stream turned to the left, and I saw a wall of rock before me. At such a point a whirlpool effect was inevitable, and this, apart from the danger of a wreck on the rocks in the rapids, I had most dreaded.

I noticed the elbow was rounded towards the south, forming a sort of pool, and reminding me of the Niagara whirlpool, but it was not so large, and, as the raft began to be seized by a stronger current, it was also evident that the bed sloped again, and that the stream attained a dangerous velocity. The waves spanked and broke over the raft, the distance was white with foam; I was rocked as in a cradle, and I felt that I must abandon the tiller, insert myself between the posts, and hold on to the loops. If the raft escaped or survived engulfment I might then be saved. The balloons were intact and their attachments unbroken. They were doing some service, though a slight one, as they dragged behind me, restraining my descent.

Another feature appeared ahead in the rapidly nearing vortex, about which all doubt was now removed; I could see its powerful rotation. This new feature was a periodic uplift of the water from the pool in a broad spout or fountain, ejected obliquely and falling on the waves beyond the whirlpool itself. At first this outburst alarmed me. Its discharge seemed so unaccountable and so violent. A moment later I felt it might mean my safety.

On like an arrow *we* sped—the raft had become a companion—and fearing the tiller might in some way become entangled or deflected and in the turmoil of our certain submergence play some fatal trick that would disable me, I cast it loose. I

could see it swing past the raft, and dance madly on the combing surges. Then it was lost but I strained my eyes to detect, if possible, its emergence in the spout ahead. I thought I saw it, but now in the clutches of the ravenous tide, I became blind with unmistakable terror. The noise of the chaotic water around me seemed like a low roar, mingled, too, with an interminable hiss, and in the gloom of the desolate stony chasm the menace almost darkened my mind and made me unconscious.

A boom struck my ear, low, definite, smothered; I attributed it to the regurgitant geyser from the whirlpool. A leap forward, a choking rattle from the logs beneath, and then a wrenching twist that threw my feet from under me, and the water rose solidly over my head. I could reach the air by pulling myself upward on the straps about my arms. I saw the balloons tugging desperately and two reports like the bursting of a bomb immediately followed. They were in tatters. Again I sank; this time it seemed like doom. Yet I was still conscious, and then, as if an omnipotent arm thrust from below raised us, I felt the raft pressed upward against the welter and inrush, and then a titanic convulsion, and the raft, and I dangling to the posts, were shot bodily out of the maelstrom, though scarcely lifted above the surface; and, enveloped in the hill of water that accompanied us, the raft swam out again upon the descending stream, in a turbulence of waves that made me dizzy with its confusion.

I hardly realized I was alive, but in a few minutes every sense attested its reality. I *felt* the pack on my back—I had very early secured it there—I *heard* that the creaking, groaning logs were still intact, I *looked* before me and saw the hamper had been swept away, I *tasted* the cold water in my mouth. I was saturated, it almost seemed, and I was faint,

perhaps from shock, in a measure. The sturdy posts which had been my refuge were unshaken, and now, straight before me in a shouting turmoil, the waters put on to me a friendly guise, and seemed just delirious over my escape. So quickly does the temperature and spirit of the heart find its reflection in inanimate nature. For now, though I had been despoiled I was safe, and my gun, my cartridges, some food at least, my fishing tackle, the evidences of Krocker Land, many notes, the compass, matches—in a watertight box—and, thanks to my forethought a rug and a sleeping bag were all with me, as most helpful friends.

The recovery had been so unexpected that I felt gay as a child, and as the French say, everything about me wore for a little while *couleur de rose.* The stream itself, ample and full, sprawled out in a wider bed; before me a break in the canon walls, on one side, indicated some tributary valley and affluent and—I was rummaging my pack—here was a bottle of undiluted, unwatered wine! I almost emptied it. A tortilla and some strips of dried meat completed my banquet. I was myself again. The poles and paddles lashed to the posts were still there, and one of the former was soon in my hands, for the guidance of the boat. The best I could do now would be to keep her off the shores, turn and wriggle as she might in the middle stream.

My composure now returned, and permitted me to consider my predicament more calmly. Where was I? A few minutes after I asked myself this question, the lateral valley opened to view. It was a rough, rocky streambed in which now a probably much shrunken tributary to the river—Homeward Bound—on which I was, made its way from a bare, rugged upland. But here I caught a glimpse of the sluggishly ascending vapors and clouds from the Perpetual Nimbus. I could not be mistaken.

The wall of wavering whiteness seemed to stretch southward. The confirmation of the Professor's hypothesis was complete. The Valley of Rasselas was an enclosed pit, on all sides of which the terraced zones we had traversed on the east, would certainly be found. Here on the west less developed, compressed and narrower, they still existed. Radiumopolis at least was excentrically placed in the valley, but the valley itself was excentric also. Then I would soon be crossing the Rim, and apprehensions of new difficulties swarmed in my mind. The canon I was in cut across the great circular fissure which surrounded Rasselas, and the position of the whirlpool perhaps marked the crossing. Could it be possible? It was an extraordinary geological situation I was sure, but its explanation could wait. What terrors of rapids, falls, or cataracts, or more whirlpools lay before me? I looked ahead. The light from the stationary sun had gone, but the friendly luminary that now more than replaced it, was burning in the sky, and it showed my future course.

To my delight, on either side the canon walls declined; indeed, it seemed that far off they became simply high banks and nowhere were there perceptible disturbances in the stream itself. The great volume poured its almost unruffled torrent over a very ancient bed, and the whole aspect of the river assumed a peculiar sedateness, as it were, compared with the rushing, headlong haste it had shown above the whirlpool. And there! On either side rose the snow crowned pinnacles of the Rim! The encircling mountain fence of Krocker Land was opened here by a valley, and in that valley, deeply entrenched, Homeward Bound was placed. And now a new and beautiful feature developed. Brooks or streams, fed perhaps by melting snows or ice, leaped into my river from the still high cliffs.

I could count a dozen or so, the splash of the falling water breaking the surface of the river into waves, and the noise of their motion and impact filling the canon with a half musical roar. It was a fascinating picture.

The river turned, not abruptly, but swinging southward in a long arm or curve, and then a vista developed that, for an instant, filled me with fresh alarm. On the left side the cliffs fell away, and their place was taken by the face, it looked so, of a small glacier. I was at sea level perhaps. The wall rose somewhat on the right, and intermittent threads of water still seamed their sides with lines of light and whiteness, but to the left there appeared the wide mouth of a glacial *coulisse*, and from the ice mass in it, little bergs floated in the now much retarded and widened river. The bergs scared me. A white or yellowish turbidity spread from the glacier, the contribution of rock-meal brought by the river that issued from beneath it.

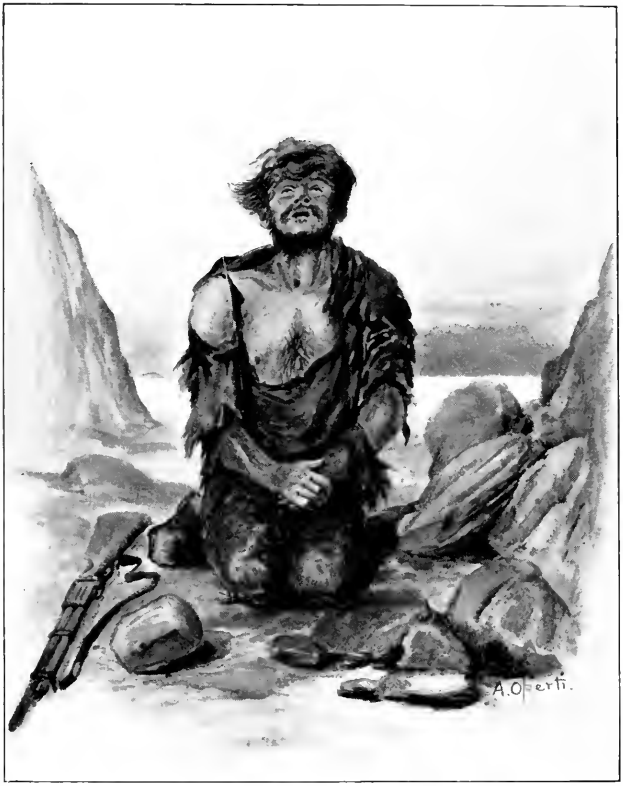
It was quite possible to guide my raft by the paddle I had, and, though the Homeward Bound maintained considerable current still, it had but little directional force. In half an hour I was opposite the glacier, and amongst its bergs. I gazed eagerly seaward, trusting I might catch some glimpse of the coast that must be near at hand. But the view closed again, there seemed to be a contraction of the river, the walls rose on both sides, and now the river's flow was but little more than the propulsion caused by its residual momentum.

The ice serpent wound upward into the snow recesses of the mountains. Opposite to me its riven front glowed with beryl and sapphire veins; the white calves lazily caught the motion of the stream, and almost, it seemed to me, resented my intrusion, so suddenly did they gather about me, either in derision or in menace. I did indeed feel

powerless among them. Ice cakes flecked the stream. I was in a treacherous company. Anxiously I steered my craft through them, but in the mist that sprang from their sides, I would sometimes fail to see them and an inauspicious bump would send me sprawling. I felt that the moment of release was approaching. Soon the pale, haunted, Arctic Ocean would hold me. I felt its immensity already, and now that the excitement of the scramble for liberty, this arrowy voyage down the strange and majestic chasm of a great new river of the earth, was behind me, my heart quailed before the UNKNOWN, that confronted me with what—Deliverance or Death?

The mountains sloped away on either hand, or were, in fact, already behind me, for I was now floating with a diminished current that aided my avoidance of the torpidly drifting bergs. I was in a canal, literally cut through an ancient gigantic moraine, the vast scourings of an ancient ice sheet. It was not long delayed—my emergence on the ice-bound shore of western Krocker Land. The banks declined and slowly disappeared, yielding now to the broad fringe of a coastal plain where the river, encountering a varying resistance, had succumbed to the vagaries of mere idleness, and swung in broad loops to the sea. Yes—there it was—to quote the graphic words of Nansen—"that strange Arctic hush, and misty light, over everything,—that grayish white light caused by the reflection from the ice being cast high into the air against masses of vapor, the dark land offering a wonderful contrast."

And now the river widened, its banks receded and dwindled. To the north the high Rim advanced upon the sea, and black promontories rose in august severity in the glare of day, desolate and grim, their skirts fringed with the white surf of



ERICKSON'S ESCAPE

inrolling waves. Beyond them open water and then ice floes, endless prospect! To the south the Rim declined abruptly into a wide detrital platform of sand and clay banks, and huge boulders, and, here and there, like white ships, the icebergs that had stranded. I was in the Kara Sea. Beyond that dread, compassionless horizon lay Siberia—but could I reach it? The awful chill of a realization of my abject helplessness for the first time overwhelmed me. I was alone in the Arctic Ocean, a mere atom before the uncontrollable forces that a whim of the weather might suddenly summon forth on their wild errands of destruction; or else a waif cast on a desert shore to be left with pitiless irony, in the calm scorn of merciless Nature, to perish.

I'm not a praying man, Mr. Link, but somehow . I asked GOD then to help me.

CHAPTER XVI

The Sequel

I worked my tried and still most workable and useful raft to the shore, and stepped from it to the sand, between some ragged floes of ice—a kind of ice foot. The loss of the hamper was a heavy blow, and to confront the unknown future with a few morsels of meat and some soaked *tortillas* seemed only a desperate and suicidal bravado. I was for a while stunned into a torpor of inaction. I had managed to force the raft somewhat up on the shore, but I took the precaution of further loading it with stones. Until I had more clearly made up my mind what would be my next step, I would not part company with this friend, for somehow to me *then*, the mute bundle of logs had become almost animate with a human affection.

And now the reaction against fatigue and all the sleepless hours made me faint and weak. I must first sleep. I untied the welcome sleeping bag and the rug, and disengaging the heavy gold belt—what a mockery its value seemed in this sterile solitude—and the small hatchet which it held, I rolled myself up, and instantly fell into unconsciousness. I must have slept almost twenty-four hours, for the sun which had been declining to the horizon was in almost the same position when I awoke. I was ravenously hungry, but my courage had returned, and at least I felt equal to considering my plans.

But first it was food. I made a fire, warmed or toasted the flat pancakes and roasted the meat chunks, and these with water contrived to satisfy my hunger. The contents of the pack were now my sole resource. They had been well soaked, but I had spread them on the white sands, and in the heat of the sun they had dried, even the matches proving serviceable again. My gun, which had been well greased (swagged) was uninjured, and the wax-smeared cartridges retained their murderous facility of exploding. If game was to be had the life in my body might yet reasonably expect considerable prolongation. And why not game? I recalled our first encounter when we were unceremoniously introduced to Krocker Land—the musk oxen. But was I to become a prowling Robinson Crusoe; were the days, the weeks, the months—there could not be years—before me to be a savage struggle to just live and then realize—*starvation?* At any rate there must be a plan. What should it be? It was then that my mind working feverishly over a few projects—the only ones I could conceive of, and all of them preposterous—was suddenly arrested by recalling that this very summer, even during this month, Coogan and Stanwix, Phillips and Spent would be pushing the "Astrum" through that very sea—but farther east—to find us. On that peg of suggestion I hung my hopes. I would work eastward if I could, or as far as possible, keep a watchout, and hope for the best. What else?

At first I thought I could make use of the raft, as there was much open water, but it required only a little circumspection to show me that the plan was impracticable; worse, fatal. I must fight my way somehow along the coast eastward, replenishing my larder with game, possibly with fish, not going farther than the inevitable angle—there must be such a turning point—where the land contours bent

northward. That was a *plan*, it had a significant value. Immediately my spirits rose, so quickly does the mind recover its equipoise in an emergency when it is set about a rational scheme of action. It was really difficult for me to desert the raft. In that long drive through the canon of Homeward Bound, the irrepressible instinct of companionship had nurtured a curious hallucination of impersonation, and the bundle of dead logs had assumed an indefinite but real vitality. Could not I shape or build from it a serviceable sledge, and still, transformed, keep it in my service? Then again, could I spare the time to effect this change? I had only my hatchet for an implement, and the thongs and strands, rope and cords that had so stoutly kept it intact for nails and iron bands.

I abandoned the project, but before I started on my desperate search, I hacked enough timber from it to build a fire and cooked or roasted my last meal over it. It partook to me of the fantastic feeling of a valedictory.

The shore along which I now made my way was favorable for a rapid advance. It was a low upland, mainly detrital in composition with a beach apron of sand, gravel, and mud flats. It sloped upward to a semi-piedmont zone of hills, beyond which towered the monarchs of the Rim. The view landward was inspiritingly beautiful, and when the fogs that rolled inward from the vast ice-flecked and iceberg-studded sea, were absent the picture was entrancing. Rich verdure covered the upland, inundating, like a green flood, the opening valleys, slopes and sheltered ingles, and bearing on its bosom the Arctic yellow poppy and even the golden stars of the dandelion. Surely in this land I might expect to find game.

Nor was I to look long. I could just see, far off against a protruding dazzling granite mound, a

moving spot. It was the *Ovibos hopkinsi*. I almost laughed. I recurred to our first encounter with this new mountain sheep, when Hopkins and I first saw it, in an almost identical environment, when we landed at Krocker Land. I watched it with the eye of a voluptuary. Fresh meat would taste—Ah! my mouth watered—I could not venture a simile.

I hastened up the beautiful Arctic glen, and the still unsuspecting animals moved towards me. Now they saw me, and the bulls ranged themselves in defence, behind them the still grazing cows, startled only for a moment into attention. There was no inclination to escape. Only as I fired and the foremost bull staggered sideways and then dropped headlong at my second shot, did the herd shuffle to one side and then scamper away. Before I had reached the fallen leader their shaggy heads had disappeared over a fold of ground that shut in an adjoining valley.

I cut some steaks and loaded myself with the juicy red masses of flesh. Although Greely and Peary had failed to smoke-dry meat, perhaps I might succeed. I returned to the raft. It had become a base of operations. Here I cooked my steak and with the tasteless *tortillas* they made a feast. But the momentary thought of jerking the meat was hopeless. It would take too long and then it might prove futile. If Coogan was looking for me, I must be looking for him. One more long sleep and then I must "be going." I felt sad, and the glorious dying day bathing the horizon in carmine and gold, to be shifted a little further on, with scarcely a change of color, into sunrise, from its very exorbitant splendor oppressed me. I slept, but I tossed with forbidding dreams. I WAS NOT WELL.

The next day I started down the coast, but I

revisited the *ovibos*, tore more meat from the carcass, and with my pack, a sleeping bag, the rug, my gun, and a bundle of splinters of wood I began my journey. The heaped up bundles on my back bent me, and I did not expect to make a record in walking. I was carrying my household on my back. But the favoring character of the shore cheered me, and it almost seemed that the peaks, barricades and buttresses of the mountains receded. I was on an extensive morainal or alluvial plain, furrowed by small valleys and inconspicuous ridges, where it rose to the amphitheatrical wall of the Krocker Land Rim. *If* it would last!

The diary of my daily progress for the next few days need not be rehearsed here. It was satisfactory on the whole, but the sure signs of scurvy had begun to show themselves, and some rheumatic ailment began to make every step I took painful. I seemed to see the end of it all, and, anticipation fed disease. My march each day lessened; the meat had been consumed in a few days, and was supplemented by ducks, a seal, and another *ovibos*, so that for almost ten days I suffered no deprivation of actual nourishment, but my swelling limbs, the pasty and aching jaws, the occasional vanishing of all strength, and temporary collapses gave insistent warnings that I could not continue. A dull sense of helplessness supervened, my memory wavered, delusions visited my brain, and ever and again the white ice-packed sea seemed a snow covered tableland on which I might walk safely. Only some frantic remnant of sanity prevented this suicidal impulse. I was delirious at times with pain.

And the end of the propitious coast was in sight. I must have made, Mr. Link, in those ten days, by superhuman exertions, some one hundred and fifty miles, furiously driving on, almost unconscious of

my motion. And now a black rampart of bold hills, stretched out like an arresting arm, crossed the horizon. Higher and higher rose the forbidding cliffs, and I saw with despair that they entered the sea in escarpments, whose vertical and gloomy walls were beaten by waves, or against which the churned ice was flung in broken cakes. Beyond the stern barrier my flagging strength could never take me. And yet, in my feebleness I hastened to reach it as an ultimate goal over which, I almost thankfully noted, so worn was I in spirit, I could not pass. Temperamental decay was at work in me, and I became inert. *I did not care.*

At last—oh how heavily dragged my feet, how wearingly surged the pains! I had come to the dark shadow of the cliffs. It was a sheer precipice. My wandering and scarcely seeing eyes dimly noted its immensity. It crushed the last vestiges of effort. Its undeniable prohibition smote me as a physical violence. I fell headlong. Nothing was with me but my gun. Pack, rug, sleeping bag, all had been dropped, the first last, for to its unequivocal testimony (in the gold and in the radium) of all I had seen, all I had been through, I clung with an almost demented obstinacy. And now that was left behind. Some recurrent spasm of vitality returned; I struggled to my feet, shaking in an ague, and just able to support myself against a detached splinter of rock, almost at the foot of the overhanging bluff, that seemed to my seared sight to touch the sky.

What was it then that made me seize my gun, and, steadying myself by some superhuman help—Yes, Mr. Link, by some help not of this earth—empty the magazine of cartridges in a crashing volley against that impenetrable rock? Was it madness, the last rage of defeated purpose, or was it inspiration? I do not know, but as the sharp

reports multiplied, and to my racked nerves sounded in terrific *crescendoes* I fell forward. The sense of hearing was the last to desert me, and though my eyes had closed, even while the shattering reverberations from the cliff rang in them, I HEARD AN ANSWERING SHOT. It was all I heard. I had swooned.

But, Mr. Link, the ebbing tide of life returned, slowly indeed at first, so slowly that the friendly faces around me seemed only indefinite, leering masks, before which I shuddered. Warmth reasserted its sway, the warmth of life. I felt fresh, cleanly nourishment, the *elixir of whisky* slipping down my throat, and then a delicious thrill of comfort, and I became conscious, to find myself eating and drinking and around me the anxious, staring faces of Coogan, Isaac Stanwix, Bell Phillips, and Jack Spent.

It was for an instant only, the violence of my return to consciousness weakened me, and I sank back in their arms, but as I did, the overmastering care that lay deepest in my heart struggled into utterance, through all my clouded mind, and I gasped, pointing to the path over which I had come, "The pack—the pack."

It was not many hours later that I again awoke, in the luxurious cabin of the "Astrum," pillowed in an easy chair, and watching with grateful eyes the ministering mercies of my friends. Very gradually my sapped strength and health were renewed, but indeed it sometimes occurs to me that I shall never be quite all I once was. The multiplied strains, repeated, contrasted, with the unapparent but *real* nervous shocks of excitement suffered in the ordeals of entering Krocker Land, and those less obviously but most certainly disordering experiences in Radiumopolis, with the whole effect of the monstrous unreality of it all, have unhinged my

ERICKSON'S RESCUE

system. And then—the agony of my last humiliation in this city.

The story told by Coogan was a most simple one. It corroborated my expectations and of course exactly justified my conduct. The "Astrum" according to orders left Point Barrow, and steamed into the ice, which proved to be unusually negotiable, looking for us. They failed to discover any signs of us on the ice pack, but in an adventuresome trip northward, invited to the undertaking by the open water, they made a landfall, and found there the "*Pluto*," our naphtha launch. It was on almost exactly the place of our landing from the storm. They concluded we had skirted the new land, reconnoitering it edgewise, as it were, or at any rate their first and prudent course was to do so. They had managed to creep on safely through broad leads between the shore ice and the big floes, until they came to the *massif*, that, like an out-thrust arm with clenched fist, cut the land in two. They had rather gingerly picked their way through the ice around the frowning headlands when my shots were heard. The rest is the usual story—the story I have hinted at—and my pack was safe. *It lay at my feet.*

Now to tell the truth I was rather reticent with Coogan and the others as to my own adventure. I did not wish then to tell them everything or even much. The whole marvel must be elsewhere and differently unfolded. It must be given to the world through science, and the national government of the United States must be empaneled for the rescue of my companions. I desired the audience of a nation, and the ears of the world. And now—deplorable reversion—I am telling it to you alone. I hid much or all, admitted that the new continent was large, that we had entered it, that the Professor and Hopkins were pursuing in-

vestigations there, and that I must return in time with a larger expedition. They seemed to understand my reticence—or was it commiseration? —and good-naturedly left me alone. About two months later we arrived safely in San Francisco.

("Mr. Link"—the voice of the speaker perceptibly lowered, I might say perceptibly trembled—"it has been a pleasure to rehearse this wonderful experience, pleasant to recall my two friends still exiled in that mysterious continent, pleasant to believe that through the instrumentality of your publication, they may be extricated from their bewildering embarrassments, but—it is not pleasant to finish my story."

Mr. Erickson was silent for a few moments, as if he half expected me to release him from the implied obligation of explaining more completely the origins of the predicament in which we found him. But I was relentlessly silent, and after a glance at my imperturbable and fixed gaze, he turned his head aside and resumed the "last measure of his tale.")

I was not long in finding my former acquaintance to whom now instinctively, in my dearth of companionship, I had recourse for advice, and sensibly for succor—Carlos Huerta. Nothing could exceed the boisterous ardor of his welcome. He was overjoyed and appeared almost rapturous in his demonstrations of astonishment and delight at seeing me. Of course I succumbed all too easily to the caresses of his friendship—and then (the speaker paused again and a flood of carmine filling his cheeks and glowing warmly even in his temples, revealed his confusion), he introduced me to the most beautiful woman I have ever seen in all my life, Angelica Sigurda Tabasco, whose intimate, Diaz Ilario Aguadiente, was a gentleman of marvelous cordiality. I was literally taken to their hearts. You see, sir, plainly my state of defencelessness against

these scheming reprobates—cunning parasites of fortune—whose suave geniality disarmed suspicion, and whose enthusiastic sympathy, not unintelligent either, warmed my weary heart and opened my lips.

They wormed a good deal out of me, they saw the gold—*not the buckle*—the radium, and they actually listened to the recital of our visit to the Gold Makers. Then they laid their plans. I was to be coaxed to New York—how many specious inducements could be given for me to go there. The season was not too late for any relief expedition, and at New York all the avenues of approach to capital could be reached. I was to give a public lecture, the best social and scientific auspices would protect it, and from New York the wave of interest would radiate to all the capitals of the world. It seemed so simple, it was so inviting, and then it was urged with such cordial plausibility and fervor, and all accompanied by that personal suasion of admiration, and the artifices of encouragement in surroundings that were sumptuous and enthralling. I was completely taken in.

I came on to New York with Huerta, who lavished every kindness on me, and whose incessant questioning as to the process of gold transmutation which I had seen easily assumed the guise of a natural curiosity. The merest accident prevented my bringing on to New York the precious pack in which the gold souvenirs, the *gold buckle*, and the radium mineral masses were preserved. The trio—themselves deceived by their gloating cupidity—had urged the necessity of protecting this property by placing it in a safety-deposit vault, and when the day arrived for Huerta and me to leave San Francisco, at the last moment, and just as I expected to call at the safe deposit company to claim and remove my property, I was seized with a chill that rapidly increased into a convulsive fit,

followed by a temporary coma. I was alone in the room of my hotel and the seizure was so sudden that I was unable to summon assistance. When it had passed, much time had been lost, and actually fearing to reclaim the pack in my then physical condition I concluded to leave it, and have it forwarded later upon a written order.

This was quite feasible, and in some respects, so I thought at the moment, safer and more preferable, as I had taken the unusual precaution of enclosing the pack in a strong metal box.

When on the train I explained to Huerta my mishap he at first changed his demeanor, frowned and fidgeted and nettled me by his half suppressed acerbity. I think then I might have been saved, had his suspicious temper prolonged itself. But it was gone almost instantly, and his customary deceptive solicitude and optimistic confidence replaced it and my doubts vanished. It was also supposed by me that Angelica and Diaz would remain some time longer in San Francisco, and when I encountered them in east Fifty-eighth Street I was stupified, though of course, by that time, I had no reason to feel any surprise over any development in my relations with these monsters.

In New York Huerta conducted me to an eastside boarding house. It is incredible how I permitted myself to follow him. Even while suspicion and distrust began to assail me I accompanied him into a common sort of house, apparently the resort of men only, and rather hard looking characters at that, and yet with these pregnant signs of coming mischief, I kept alongside of this inhuman brute, sat with him in a duskily lighted room at a shabby table, served by some slatternly woman waiters, under surroundings hopelessly sordid and dull. I was not myself, Mr. Link; the stamina of resistance was extirpated in me, and I was led like a child. The *denouement* followed quickly.

That very night or evening I went to my room or what I supposed was my room, only to discover it was a small bathroom, provided with a sleeping cot. I had preceded Huerta, who pointed to the door. As I opened it my surprise caused me to retreat, but Huerta pushed me in, and instantly he was joined by two other men from a room near at hand, and the door was locked. Of course, as by a flash of light, an unexpected danger was revealed. I saw that I was trapped.

There happened to be one chair in the place. Huerta, whose whole demeanor now altered, motioned toward it with a scowl and the other men stepped forward. Each of them carried a short leaden pipe. Mr. Link, I am not a timid man—what I have gone through shows that—but I was intimidated then. I glanced around me; there was not a window in the room; it was lighted by a smoking gas jet.

"Well," I said, collecting my thoughts to meet the situation, "I guess you have me. What is it? What do you want?"

Huerta's agreeable style was resumed. "Why just this, Mr. Erickson. You have got a sort of knowledge which is rather valuable, and we want to make an agreement with you; you might call it a sort of combine. You have got hold of some very interesting information. Let's pool it and work it for our common benefit."

"What information," I asked and leaped to my feet, infuriated at the smiling, insulting visage that he wore as an answer to my question.

"Oh! Calm yourself. These gentlemen and myself are not icebergs, but perhaps we can hit as hard. The thing is simple enough. Sign this paper."

He held out a folded sheet which I at once recognized as having been torn from a writing pad in the

Pullman in which we had come to New York. It was an order on the safe deposit company in San Francisco to forward to him, Carlos Huerta, my pack, the satchel of gold and radium. Then followed his address, which was — east Fifty-eighth Street, the very house in which you found me, Mr. Link.

I threw the paper in his face. It was *maladroit.* His temper—and he had the passion of a fiend—broke loose and he struck me. I jumped at him, and hurled the chair straight at his head, but it was intercepted, and, in a trice, the three rushed at me and held me, kicking, squirming, and shouting, on the narrow bed. No help came; I was bound and was knocked almost senseless.

(It was some time before Erickson could continue; he was in a pitiful agitation, walking over and across the room with a most distressful expression on his face. At length he pulled himself together and resumed his story.)

Well, they kept me in that room some five days. I was fed and attended by my captors—I think now partially drugged by them. But my will remained stubborn. I had faced death before, I could face it now, though it seemed more terrifying in this wretched shape than meeting it undisguised beneath the open skies. This obstinacy drove Huerta frantic. I calculated that it would lead to an outbreak or issue soon. *It did.*

The sixth night the room was entered by the three men to whom, now weakened, dazed, nervous with disgust, I could offer no resistance. I was really sick. They tied my arms and legs and gagged my mouth, and put me in a sack. It was then, before they completed their task, that I managed to secrete a few scribbled words on a slip of paper, which I had kept by me, and later succeeded in forcing through an aperture in the bag.

This paper your boy Riddles found. I was whisked off in an automobile, unloaded like a sack of potatoes at the door of — east Fifty-eighth Street, and taken to the attic floor where you and the police found me.

Before you came I was confronted with Angelica and Diaz, and the proposition was very attractively made that nothing should be said in any public way about Krocker Land, but that my gold specimen should be sold as bullion, and that we four should form a transmutation plant with the radium that I had brought back. Accede to this, they explained (they were somehow convinced that I was withholding the secret technique I had learned of the process of transmutation), and combine with them, and my life and freedom would be assured.

I saw through the ruse, feeble as I had mentally become. My life, at least its short continuance, depended upon my resisting their demands. Once granted, the paper signed, what I knew of the transmutation revealed—and I now sedulously encouraged their belief in a more or less recondite process which demanded physical apparatus and silver bullion—and my life would be but a flash in the pan—out—like that. (And Erickson snapped his fingers.) If I could delay the upshot—inevitable in any case unless relief came—until some lucky chance brought me deliverance and I hoped the paper scribble would—I might yet survive.

Therefore I pleaded, I argued, I promised everything if they would liberate me, and then upon their savage refusal, I grew dogged and silent. It was then or a little afterwards that the conversation occurred that you and the police overheard and then, when these ruthless, bloodless imps of Hell were about to inflict their brutal torture—the door was burst open, *and all was over.*

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I recall distinctly the evening on which Mr. Erickson concluded his stupendous narrative. It had been agreed that, apart from some brief announcements before the various proper scientific bodies of the world, no details should precede the publication in book form of Erickson's personal account and the serial report in the *Truth Getter*. All this is now a part of history, and a part which fairly challenges comparison with those thunderstruck days when Columbus and Cabot, Vespucius, Hudson, and Verrazani rolled up the curtain that hid the western world.

I say I remember the evening. It was a sombre dying twilight in March. The servant had just lit the lamp of the library, and a hoarse wind rose petulantly outside, like the distant drone of a fog whistle. A vision stood at the door. It was my daughter, Sibyl. She was resplendent. I noticed Erickson's awed rapture. She held an evening paper in her hand. Her voice was as beautiful as her person. Its music conveyed this message:

"Father, this paper has a telegram from St. John's, Newfoundland, saying that Donald McMillan has reached Krocker Land, and below it is one from Point Barrow, saying Stefansson has reached Krocker Land. Isn't that a surprising coincidence?"

Erickson sprang toward her, and she handed him the paper; his face in the red reflection from the hearth looked sallow. He read the lines.

"My God, it's true— Then Hopkins and the Professor are saved."

"But," I interjected with proper journalistic trepidation, "where do we come in, Mr. Erickson?"

He gazed at me as if petrified:

"RUSH THE COPY."

It was rushed, and before McMillan or Stefansson were again heard from, Erickson's story was the property of the world.

EDITORIAL NOTE

There are many things in the foregoing pages that perhaps awaken incredulity. There are some inconsistencies of statement. There seems to be discoverable a feeble effort at invention. The reader will almost instantly, upon reading the last word of it—and surely he can afford to skip none—feel that perhaps a little enlightened cross examination would have confused a veracious chronicler. I am inclined to suppose that almost mechanically he might murmur to himself, "Those balloons, *dubious*—those tubes, *impossible*—the Crocodilo-Python, *preposterous*—the little Hebrews, *madness*—the radium chasm, *a nightmare*—transmutation, *poppy-cock*—the Perpetual Nimbus, *deliberate lie*," and so on, until affected by his own overheated thoughts and a partially justifiable resentment at having been made the victim of a fabrication, which has consumed some ten hours of his time, and would have, assuming its reality, supplied him with the most perdurable reasons for rejoicing that his lot was cast at the beginning of this twentieth century, he indulges in some specific appeals, *more majorum*, to the demon of darkness to make away with its editor.

Gentle—pardon the inappropriateness of the word, but to say *Irate* might only increase my condemnation—Reader—*wait. We shall all see.* Vilhjalmar Stefansson and Donald McMillan are on the very verge of this new continent.

THEY WILL TELL US.

"Not so fast, Mr. Editor"—It is the voice of the wife of the Gentle Reader—"Not so fast! What connection had Spruce Hopkins with either Angelica or Diaz? You remember the flat silver medal that Hopkins flung into the air on Krocker Land Rim, and which was the last token Erickson received from the Yankee?"

Ah—Madame, that is another story.